

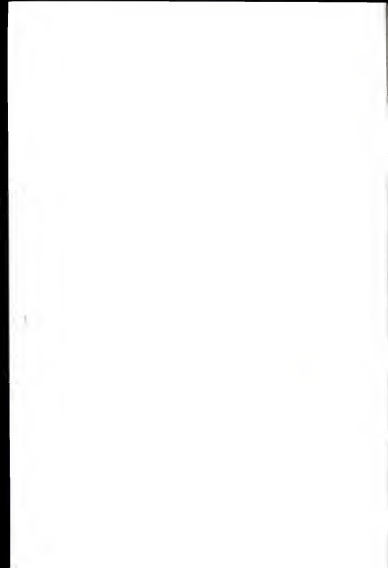
■ September • October • November 2004

OUR DAILY BREAD



*I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence
comes my help? My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm 121 1-2



■ September • October • November 2004

OUR DAILY BREAD®

For Personal and Family Devotions

Since 1956

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September 1
Wednesday

A FRIEND OF SINNERS

READ:

Matthew 9:9-13

I have not come to
call the righteous, but
sinners, to repentance.
—Luke 5:32

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Psalms 135–136

■ 1 Corinthians 12

Tertullian, an early Roman writer, described the relationships between the Christians and non-Christians of his day this way: "We live among you, eat the same food, wear the same clothes We sojourn with you in the world, renouncing neither forum, nor market, nor bath, nor booth, nor workshop, nor inn We till the ground with you, we join with you in business ventures."

We too must seek the lost, as Jesus did—and it doesn't take much effort. It's good to ask ourselves from time to time, "How many friends do I have who are lost?" —David Roper

*Lead me to some soul today,
O teach me, Lord, just what to say;
Friends of mine are lost in sin
And cannot find their way.* —Houghton

Jesus was having dinner one evening when "many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him" (Matthew 9:10). The religious leaders of that day were outraged by His behavior. Their conclusion was that Jesus was a friend of sinners, and as it turns out, He was. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Jesus was morally separate from sinners and never took part in their lifestyle. Yet He did not separate Himself physically from sinful people. He spent time with them and became their friend.

Just like Jesus, you and I can't help but rub shoulders with all kinds of people in our daily activities.

To be a friend of Jesus is to be a friend of sinners.

September 2
Thursday

FAITH MIXED WITH DOUBT

READ:
Psalm 42

Why are you cast
down, O my soul?
... Hope in God; for
I shall yet praise Him.
—Psalm 42:11

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

- Psalms 137–139
- 1 Corinthians 13

(Psalm 47:8) and “rules by His power forever” (66:7).

Lord, I do believe You are ruling this world, but do You care about the pain? Have You forgotten to be good?

I am “good and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon [Me]” (Psalm 86:5).

Yes, Lord, You have been good to me in countless ways, including listening to my doubts and questions about You.

The answers God gives us in His Word may not take away our sadness, but we can always rest in the truth that He is wise, sovereign, and good. —Anne Cetas

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Do you struggle with doubts about God and His goodness? Read the booklet How Much Does God Control? at www.gospelcom.net/rbc/ds/q0109

When my close friend Sharon was killed in a car accident, my heart broke. I'm ashamed to admit it, but when life's circumstances hurt so much, my faith is often mixed with doubt. When Sharon died, I cried out to God with these questions:

Lord, I sure don't understand You. Why did You allow this death?

“Have you not heard? The everlasting God . . . neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable” (Isaiah 40:28). “My thoughts are not Your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways” (Isaiah 55:8).

Lord, You are beyond my understanding. But I still wonder, have You turned Your back on the world?

“God sits on His holy throne”

**Every loss leaves an empty space
that only God's presence can fill.**

September 3
Friday

SHALLOW FRIENDLINESS

READ:

John 15:9-17

A man who has
friends must himself
be friendly.
—Proverbs 18:24

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Psalms 140-142

■ 1 Corinthians 14:1-20

Recently I received a phone call from a friendly-sounding person who told me she wanted to make my life easier. She called me by my first name and warmly asked how my day was going. Then she informed me that she could help me save thousands of dollars a year if I would simply refinance my home with a particular mortgage company. But once she understood that I really wasn't interested, her friendliness evaporated.

Such insincere friendliness is often just a culturally correct attitude that some people use to impress others or to get something from them.

Contrast that self-serving attitude with the genuine friendship Jesus showed us. He said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). Then He demonstrated self-sacrificing love for us by dying on the cross to forgive our sins.

When we trust Jesus as our Savior and learn to obey Him, we experience a deep friendship that gives reality and sincerity to the friendliness we show to others.

Lord, help us to avoid the shallow friendliness that uses others to get what we want. Teach us instead to radiate the warmth of genuine Christlike friendliness to everyone we meet. —Dave Egner

*If friendliness is genuine,
It surely will convey
A warm and caring attitude
In all we do and say. —D. De Haan*

**True friendliness can be a magnet
that draws people to Christ.**

September 4
Saturday

LET'S GET GROWING!

READ:
Psalm 1

Grow in the grace and
knowledge of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ.
—2 Peter 3:18

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Psalms 143–145
■ 1 Corinthians 14:21–40

Several years ago my interest in flowers had our home resembling a nursery. There's something about the presence of growing plants that I find very enjoyable. As I daily inspected their progress, I gained from my little green friends a new appreciation of the joy and necessity of the wonderful process of growth.

As Christians, we too are like plants. We should put down our roots, break up through the earth, spread out our branches, and burst into blossom. Such a thriving condition, however, isn't always evident in our lives. It's so easy to become bored and listless in the bland routine of our daily activities. Often we just hang on and merely exist without moving steadily toward maturity and fruitfulness.

At such times we are at a spiritual standstill and must allow Jesus the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) to warm our hearts anew with His love. We must send our roots deep into the Word of God by meditating on it day and night (Psalm 1:2). Then we will be like a fruitful tree planted by rivers of living water, and our branches will extend outward in an ever-increasing influence and witness. They will be filled with blossoms that reflect the beauty of righteous living.

If we've become dormant, let's get growing! —Mart De Haan

If God can make a tiny seed

Into a bloom so fair,

What can He make, O soul, of you

Through study, faith, and prayer? —Anon.

Decay starts when growth stops.

September 5
Sunday

WHO'S WHO IN "WHOEVER"?

READ:
John 3:14-21

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. —John 3:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Psalms 146-147
■ 1 Corinthians 15:1-28

Moorhouse. But since it says 'whoever,' there can be no mistake!" He could be sure it included him.

Yes, *whoever* covers everyone. If you already believe in Christ, thank Him for your salvation. If not, place your trust in Christ right now and receive His gift of eternal life and all the blessings that accompany it—deliverance from condemnation, forgiveness of sin, peace with God, and the promise of heaven.

Who's the who in "whoever"? It's you. It's me. It's everyone and anyone. That's who! —Richard De Haan

When Jesus said "whoever,"

He included you and me;

For no one is excluded

From His offer full and free. —Hess

Henry Moorhouse always enjoyed preaching on John 3:16. When he came to the word *whoever*, he emphasized its all-inclusiveness. That term, he pointed out, makes it clear that everyone and anyone who trusts Christ will be saved.

He was glad that the word *whoever* appeared in John 3:16 instead of the name Henry Moorhouse. If that name were there, he couldn't be sure it meant him. He explained how he came to that conclusion:

"I once bought a typewriter that was shipped mistakenly to another man named Henry Moorhouse at a different address. If John 3:16 had said that God loved Henry Moorhouse, I could have thought it meant the other Henry

Salvation is a gift that anyone can open.

September 6
Monday

MISTER ROGERS

READ:

Colossians 3:22-4:1

Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.
—Colossians 3:23

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Psalms 148-150

■ 1 Corinthians 15:29-58

The Bible draws no such distinction, however. Paul instructed Christians to work "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:22-24).

When we honor God and help people, then our work and ministry blend together in pleasing service to the Lord. Mister Rogers showed us how we can do that in our own neighborhood. —David McCasland

*No matter what my daily chores might be
To earn my livelihood, still may I see
My job, the real position that I hold,
Is bringing others to the Master's fold. —Stalter*

The late Fred Rogers, creator and host of the much-loved children's television program *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, had a special understanding of his ministry and his work. His widow, Joanne, told a journalist: "I always remind people that he was an ordained Presbyterian minister and this was his ministry. His work was his ministry, and he loved his work; my, did he love his work. That's what makes me sad about losing him. Because I think he would have worked for a long time more if he could have, yet he accepted that with all of his heart and was ready to go to heaven."

We may feel that work is secular, but view leading a Bible study as spiritual.

**Daily work done for God
takes on eternal value.**

September 7
Tuesday

MIRROR IMAGE

READ:

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image.

—2 Corinthians 3:18

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 1-2

■ 1 Corinthians 16

transformed into the same image"—that is, the likeness of Christ.

We may wonder why we are still so far from being like Christ in our thinking and behavior. Perhaps this question will help: "Whose life do we mirror?"

God's people must reflect God's glory. To do that we must make it our habit to behold His glory. We must read and meditate on His Word. We must pray and trust God's Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. Only then can we obey His commands and depend on His promises.

Whose glory are you reflecting today? —Albert Lee

Lord, may our walk and service be

An image bright of things above,

As we reflect the unity

Of Father, Son, and Spirit's love. —Anon.

Years ago, an elderly businessman asked me, "What is your biggest problem?"

I pondered this for a while before replying: "When I look in the mirror every morning, I see my biggest problem staring at me."

Today's Scripture reading teaches me that Christians are to be like mirrors. Paul said that our faces are not to be veiled. This is logical. No one installs a mirror and then places a curtain over it. A covered mirror will not fulfill the purpose of reflecting the objects before it.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, we are described as "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." When we behold His glory, we will be "trans-

**The face is a mirror of the heart—
do people see Jesus in yours?**

September 8
Wednesday

WHO'S TO BLAME?

READ:
Luke 13:1-5

Do you suppose that
these Galileans were
worse sinners?
—Luke 13:2

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 3-5
■ 2 Corinthians 1

A husband and wife were killed when their car was struck by a drunk driver. Why did this happen? They were good people, active in their church, and dearly loved. They were in no way at fault, and we can't blame God for the other driver getting drunk.

Some people would blame the devil. Yet we must recognize the fact that an intoxicated driver who loses control of his car is likely to kill someone.

Jesus referred to two tragedies that occurred in His day. In one, Pilate had killed some Galileans and mixed their blood with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1). In the other, 18 Israelites died when a tower fell on them (v.4). The idea was that people who died like that

must have been guilty of horrendous sins.

Jesus rejected that kind of thinking. He told His hearers that instead of trying to find someone to blame, they should see such events as a call to repentance. If they willfully rejected Him as their Messiah and persisted in that sin, they would face a fearful end.

When we hear of inexplicable tragedies, let's be content to leave the "why" question unanswered. Assured of God's love (Romans 8:39), let's look at these events as a time for self-examination and repentance. —Herb Vander Lugt

*As members of a fallen race,
The question that we all must face
Is "Have we chosen to repent*

And trusted Christ whom God has sent?" —D. De Haan

**Life's tragedies are a call
to reflect and repent.**

September 9
Thursday

UNFAMILIAR ROADS

READ:
Psalm 119:105-112

Teach me Your way,
O LORD, and lead me
in a smooth path.
—Psalm 27:11

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 6-7

■ 2 Corinthians 2

Trouble often lies ahead when we go down unfamiliar roads.

I know a teenager who decided to take a different way to work one morning. As he tried to navigate unfamiliar city streets, he went through an intersection without seeing the red octagonal sign that said STOP.

Within a few seconds, he did stop, but not for a stop sign. He was pulled over by a helpful gentleman in a police car, who reminded him that he should have stopped. It cost him \$80 to learn about unfamiliar roads.

What would have happened if a guide had accompanied this young driver? What if someone had been next to him to tell him which way to go and to alert him to danger ahead?

He wouldn't be out the \$80, that's for sure.

In life, we often have to walk down unfamiliar paths—paths that may feel threatening. So how do we do that without making costly mistakes?

We take Someone along who knows the way. The psalmist recognized that Guide when he wrote, "Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness . . . make Your way straight before my face" (Psalm 5:8).

Does your path today seem unfamiliar? Ask your Father to travel the road with you. —Dave Branon

Learn more about the help God provides His children through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Read The Promise Of The Spirit at

www.discoveryseries.org/q0306

**The Spirit within us
will faithfully guide us.**

September 10
Friday

A WAY OF LIFE

READ:
Colossians 3:5-9

Do not let the sun go
down on your wrath.
—Ephesians 4:26

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 8-9
■ 2 Corinthians 3

The apostle Paul told the believers in Colosse to get rid of "anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language" (Colossians 3:8). And he told the church at Ephesus, "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26).

Christ's death and resurrection eliminated the need for daily sacrifice. But confession and repentance are still essential to the Christian's daily life. Getting rid of such things as anger, rage, and malice is a way of life, not a one-time event. —Julie Ackerman Link

*We're thankful, Lord, that when we fall
We can begin anew
If humbly we confess our sin,
Then turn and follow You. —Sper*

**The best eraser in the world
is an honest confession to God.**

"How did everything get so dirty so fast?" I grumbled as I dusted the glass tabletop. "I had the whole house clean a month ago."

"Cleaning is a way of life, not an event," my husband responded.

I know he's right, but I hate to admit it. I want to clean the house once and have it stay that way. But dirt doesn't surrender that easily. Speck by speck, the dust returns. Piece by piece, the clutter piles up.

Sin is like the dust and clutter in my house. I want to eliminate all of it with one prayer of confession and repentance. But sin doesn't surrender that easily. Thought by thought, bad attitudes return. Choice by choice, unpleasant consequences pile up.

September 11
Saturday

PRECIOUS NAMES

READ:

Luke 10:1,17-24

Rejoice because your
names are written in
heaven. —Luke 10:20

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 10-12

■ 2 Corinthians 4

No one expected the second anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to be as emotionally charged as the first. But that changed at Ground Zero in New York City when a group of 200 young people began reading the names of those who had died at the World Trade Center. The readers were the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews of the victims. The 2,792 names, precious to those who read them, brought a fresh reminder of those they had loved and lost.

A person's name represents his identity, accomplishments, and relationships. Someday our name may appear on a memorial plaque or gravestone as a mark of remembrance and honor.

But there is a heavenly ledger that is the most important of all. When Jesus' followers reported their successful service to Him, He replied: "Do not rejoice in this, . . . but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Then He thanked the Father for making the way to Him simple enough for even a child to understand (v.21).

A child values a loving relationship. In that spirit, we should rejoice that through faith in Christ we belong to God and are secure in His love for all eternity. Our names are precious to Him. —David McCasland

*Our names are recorded in heaven,
Christ's death this high honor secured;
Believers have now a new standing*

That nothing can change—we're assured. —D. De Haan

**When you trust Jesus here on earth
He writes your name in heaven.**

September 12
Sunday

THE BAD SAMARITAN

READ:
Matthew 23:1-15

Woe to you, scribes
and Pharisees,
hypocrites! For you
pay tithe . . . and have
neglected . . . justice
and mercy and faith.
—Matthew 23:23

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 13-15
■ 2 Corinthians 5

needy. But the intentions of their hearts revealed that they were actually thieves and exploiters of people.

None of us is above such behavior. We too can reach out to others with an honest desire to help them, yet underneath we may become more interested and concerned about our own welfare than about theirs.

Lord, we don't want to be like that. We long to be as real and loving as Your Son. Help us not to succumb to selfishness. As we express Your love to others, don't let our motives turn into a desire for self-advantage. —Mart De Haan

*There is a power of selfishness,
The proud and willful I,
And if my life would helpful be,
That proud old self must die. —Anon.*

A good-Samaritan-turned-bad saved a woman's life and then stole her purse. Police in Los Angeles said that a passerby had noticed a distressed woman getting ready to jump off a bridge. The man struggled with the woman until she broke free and then fell back onto the concrete and was knocked unconscious. That's when the surprise came. According to witnesses, the suspect then grabbed the woman's purse and ran off.

That man's outrageous behavior illustrates the pattern of the Pharisees. They too seemed ready to go to the rescue of others (Matthew 23:15). They were advertised as men of prayer, men of the Scriptures, champions of the faith, and helpers of the

A good motive turns bad on the hinge of selfishness.

September 13
Monday

A LIFE-LONG ISSUE

READ:
Psalm 90

The days of our lives
are seventy years; and
if . . . they are eighty
years, yet their boast is
only labor and sorrow.
—Psalm 90:10

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 16-18
■ 2 Corinthians 6

Scientists predict that the average lifespan in the United States may reach 100 by the end of the 21st century. They say the genetics that control aging could be altered to extend life beyond the 70 to 80 years referred to in Psalm 90:10. Life's final chapter, however, will still read, "It is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Moses, who wrote those words, likened our existence to grass that flourishes in the morning and is cut down and withers in the evening (vv.5-6). Although he lived to be 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7), life's brevity was never far from his mind. That's why he prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

D. J. De Pree, a longtime member of the RBC Board of Directors, took those words literally. He calculated the number of days from the date of his birth until he would turn 70. At the end of each day he'd reduce his total by one. To see that figure decline reminded him to make each day count for the Lord.

We are all part of a rapidly passing scene. That should sober us, but not discourage us. Moses affirmed God as his "dwelling place" (v.1). That's the way to face the life-long issue of our fleeting earthly existence. —Dennis De Haan

*To gain a heart of wisdom takes a lifetime,
And we are told to seek it all our days;
But whether life is long or too soon ended,
God's lovingkindness fills our heart with praise. —Hess*

A life lived for God will count for eternity.

September 14
Tuesday

JESUS' VERY OWN PEACE

READ:
Matthew 16:21-23

My peace I give you.
—John 14:27

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 19-21

■ 2 Corinthians 7

16:21-23, we see His peace in His determination to go to Jerusalem even though He knew He would suffer and die (see Luke 9:51). Peter rebuked Him, but Jesus trusted His Father and went to the cross. His purpose for living was to die.

Amy Carmichael said, "The peace of Jesus stood every sort of test, every strain, and it never broke. It is this, His very own peace, which He says 'I give.'"

No matter how big or small our trials may be, we can trust Jesus to give us His very own peace in the midst of them. —Anne Cetas

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

How can we be at peace with God? (Romans 5:1-2).

How do we find peace in our trials? (Philippians 4:6-7).

Have you experienced Jesus' peace?

When Jesus rules the heart, peace reigns.

On the eve of the execution of Christian martyr Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555), his brother offered to stay with him in the prison to be of comfort. Ridley declined, saying that he planned to sleep as soundly as usual. Because he knew the peace of Jesus, he could rest in his Lord.

The next morning, Ridley told a fellow Christian who was also being executed, "Be of good heart, brother, for God will either assuage the fury of the flame, or else strengthen us to abide it." Then they knelt and prayed by the stake and, after a brief conversation, were burned to death for their faith.

Jesus had given Nicholas Ridley *His* peace (John 14:27). But what kind of peace did Jesus have? In Matthew

September 15
Wednesday

LED BY THE SPIRIT

READ:
Romans 8:5-17

As many as are led
by the Spirit of God,
these are sons of God.
—Romans 8:14

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 22-24
■ 2 Corinthians 8

explained on the basis of public relations. We'll look to the personal God to see what He wants to do with this work."

Paul said, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). This may apply to specific decisions, but it also speaks of a general approach to life. God's children should not attempt anything without the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Being led by the Spirit and following His direction is a walk of faith that brings honor to God and leads to life and peace (vv.6,13). —David McCasland

*Led by the Spirit means yielding to Him
In all of the facets of life;
Trying to do all the work on your own
Leads to disorder and strife. —Hess*

As a young pastor during the 1940s, Francis Schaeffer was known for his organizational skill. A summer Bible school at his St. Louis church drew 700 children from all over the city and sparked a full-page story in the local newspaper. But when he and his wife began L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland, Schaeffer intentionally set no organizational goals.

He described this unusual approach as God's specific leading for them and said it was the hardest thing he had ever done. But he wanted God's hand to be seen and not the success of well-organized programs.

Schaeffer said, "It's a very hard thing in our own generation, it seems to me, to find anything that can't be

**A man's heart plans his way,
but the LORD directs his steps. —Proverbs 16:9**

September 16
Thursday

HOW TO BE A FRIEND

READ:
Proverbs 27:6-17

A man who has
friends must himself
be friendly.
—Proverbs 18:24

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Proverbs 25-26
■ 2 Corinthians 9

Our daughter Melissa had many friends during her high school days. One of her best friends was Katie. After Melissa's death in a car accident, Katie told us how they had become friends.

Katie was the new girl in school in fifth grade, having transferred from California. She felt alone and awkward and out of place—until one day early in her first year. That's when Melissa noticed her sitting alone on the bus.

Mell got up from her seat, sat down next to Katie, and started asking questions. They sat next to each other every day from then on and became inseparable friends for the next 7 years.

Our world has so many people who need just one act of love to change their lives. These people may not think they fit in, or they may be facing turmoil that makes them feel all alone. Sometimes all we need to do is extend a hand, offer a smile, or speak a word of encouragement. As believers, we know and experience the love of God (1 John 3:16), so we are especially able to reach out to people and share that love.

There are enough people to go around so that everyone can have friends. Let's take the initiative to make sure no one is left out. —Dave Branon

*I went outside to find a friend
But could not find one there;
I went outside to be a friend,
And friends were everywhere!* —Payne

**When you see someone in need,
be a friend in deed.**

September 17
Friday

NOTHING HIDDEN

READ:

1 Timothy 5:24-25

Some men's sins are clearly evident . . . Likewise, the good works of some . . . and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. —1 Timothy 5:24-25

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 27-29

■ 2 Corinthians 10

I have known people who never held a position of honor, nor were they recognized for their service. After they died, however, I learned that in their own quiet way they had touched many lives with their kind words and helpful deeds. Their good works could not remain hidden.

We can hide nothing from God—that's a solemn warning! But it's also a great comfort, for our heavenly Father knows about every encouraging smile, every kind word, and every loving deed done in Jesus' name. And someday He will reward us. —Herb Vander Lugt

*Be strong and to the will of God be true,
For though your book of life be sealed,
God knows what lies ahead awaiting you,
He knows when it should be revealed.* —Anon.

A woman had been maligned and misrepresented by an envious co-worker. She was frustrated because her attempts to confront her in private had only made matters worse. So she decided to swallow her pride and let the matter go. She said, "I'm glad the Lord knows the true situation." She expressed a profound truth that both warns and comforts.

Paul pointed out that nothing can be concealed forever (1 Timothy 5:24-25). This serves as a solemn warning. For example, a news report told about a highly respected person who was arrested for crimes he had been secretly committing for years.

Yet the fact that nothing can be hidden can also be a great consolation. I

**Neither vice nor virtue
can remain a secret forever.**

September 18
Saturday

FEEDING THE WOLF

READ:
Romans 6:15-23

Make no provision for
the flesh, to fulfill its
lusts. —Romans 13:14

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Proverbs 30-31

■ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

First they are small “harmless” desires, but they grow stronger and can ultimately control us (Romans 6:16).

To resist we must believe what the Bible tells us about temptation’s power. We must also believe that the Holy Spirit will help us to resist or to break free from its power.

But then comes the hard part. When an evil desire demands to be fed, we must say no—perhaps again and again and again. Paul said, “Make no provision for the flesh” (13:14).

Remember, what we feed will control us. —Dave Egner

Lord, grant me strength from day to day—

How prone I am to go astray!

The passions of my flesh are strong;

O God, please shield me from all wrong. —D. De Haan

There’s a story about an old Cherokee chief sitting before a flickering fire with his grandson. The boy had broken a tribal taboo, and his grandpa wanted to help him understand what made him do it. “It’s like we have two wolves inside us,” said the chief. “One is good, the other is bad. Both demand our obedience.”

“Which one wins?” asked the boy.

“The one we feed!” said the wise old chief.

Every follower of Jesus Christ can identify with that struggle. We fight an ongoing battle with selfish and sinful desires. They rise up within us and put incredible pressure on us to satisfy them. They are like ravenous hungers and unquenchable thirsts.

**It is easier to resist the first evil desire
than to satisfy all the ones that follow.**

September 19
Sunday

INFORMING GOD

READ:
Psalm 139:1-6

Can anyone teach
God knowledge?
—Job 21:22

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ecclesiastes 1-3

■ 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us. —David Roper

*The answer God may choose for me
Is sure to be the best,
So may I always thankful be,
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan*

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires; He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish

**God knows the end from the beginning,
so we can trust Him with everything between.**

September 20
Monday

IF DOUBTFUL, DON'T!

READ:

Romans 14:14-23

He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

—Romans 14:23

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ecclesiastes 4-6

■ 2 Corinthians 12

In his book *Illustrations of Bible Truth*, H. A. Ironside tells about a man who was getting ready to attend a banquet. He wanted to put on a white shirt he had worn on a previous occasion, so he was inspecting it carefully to see if it was too dirty. His wife noticed what he was doing and called out, "Remember, dear, if it's doubtful, don't." The issue was settled. The man threw the shirt into the laundry hamper.

That wife's advice reminds me of the principle in today's text. It's a principle that can be applied to questionable matters of conscience. If doubtful, don't.

The doubtful things the apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 14 had to do with meat and wine considered to be "unclean" by some but not by others (vv.14,21). He indicated that if we have doubts about whether an action is right or wrong and we do it anyway, our action is not from faith and is therefore a sin (v.23). He also pointed out that it is wrong to do anything by which a brother in Christ "stumbles or is offended or is made weak" (v.21). We must never give another Christian a reason to violate his or her conscience.

When faced with questionable practices and a troubled conscience, we would do well to make this our guideline: If it's doubtful, don't! —Richard De Haan

There is a treasure you can own

That's greater than a crown or throne;

This treasure is a conscience clear

That brings the sweetest peace and cheer. —Isenhour

**One little word can spare us a lot of trouble.
It's NO.**

September 21
Tuesday

SENT DOWN

READ:
Philippians 2:5-11

Humble yourselves
under the mighty hand
of God, that He may
exalt you in due time.
—1 Peter 5:6

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ecclesiastes 7-9
■ 2 Corinthians 13

A sportswriter described former major league baseball player and manager Don Baylor as a person who always remembered how it felt to be “sent down” to the minor leagues. When one of his players had to be demoted, he would always meet with him to explain the decision. A team owner said of Baylor, “He has been through a lot of life lessons he can share with the players.” It makes a big difference when the manager knows how a player feels.

It’s always humbling to be reduced in rank, privilege, or responsibility. But these things may come as part of God’s training in our lives. The apostle Peter wrote, “‘God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.’

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

The apostle Paul described Jesus as our example of humble submission to God. He was sent down from heaven to become a man—a “bondservant” who was obedient to the point of dying on the cross for our sins (Philippians 2:6-8).

Humility and submission to God are not signs of weakness but evidence of Christlike power and character. We can receive courage and strength from Jesus Himself, who knows how it feels to be “sent down.” —David McCasland

Teach me to do the humble task

The very best I can,

And not to look for greater calls,

Which may oppose Thy plan. —Bernheisel

**The mighty Architect of the universe
became the humble Carpenter of Nazareth.**

September 22
Wednesday

THE RIGHT SIGNAL

READ:

Matthew 14:14-21

When Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them.
—Matthew 14:14

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ecclesiastes 10-12

■ Galatians 1

Christ's way—a deep caring for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the whole person. It reveals the heart of God for sinful people—for you and for me.

The feeding of the 5,000 was a miracle born out of compassion. Jesus was moved by the physical and spiritual needs of the people (Matthew 14:14; Mark 6:34). He was not content just to teach them and then send them on their way.

As Christians, we must look at the whole person through the eyes of Jesus. Being moved by compassion always sends the right signal. —Dennis De Haan

Give me a heart sympathetic and tender,

Jesus, like Thine, Jesus, like Thine;

Touched by the needs that are surging around me,

And filled with compassion divine. —Anon.

It was a tragic mistake. On July 3, 1988, the guided-missile cruiser *USS Vincennes* shot down an Iranian airliner with 290 souls aboard. All were lost. The ship's captain mistakenly thought they were under attack by an F-14 Iranian fighter.

Public opinion polls showed that most Americans opposed paying compensation to the victims' families. The cruel treatment of American hostages in Iran was still fresh in many minds. But President Reagan approved compensation. Asked by reporters if such payment would send the wrong signal, he replied, "I don't ever find compassion a bad precedent."

The principle of revenge is so much simpler to practice. Yet compassion is

Compassion is love in action.

September 23
Thursday

WHO GETS THE LOVE?

READ:
Luke 15:11-32

Son, you are always
with me, and all that
I have is yours.
—Luke 15:31

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Song of Solomon 1-3
■ Galatians 2

A sociologist was writing a book about the difficulties of growing up in a large family, so he interviewed the mother of 13 children. After several questions, he asked, "Do you think all children deserve the full, impartial love and attention of a mother?"

"Of course," said the mother.

"Well, which of your children do you love the most?" he asked, hoping to catch her in a contradiction.

She answered, "The one who is sick until he gets well, and the one who is away until he gets home."

That mother's response reminds me of the shepherd who left 99 sheep to seek the one that was lost (Luke 15:4), the woman who searched for the one coin (v.8), and the father who threw a

party when his wayward son returned (vv.22-24).

The religious leaders of Jesus' day resented the way He gave so much attention to sinners (vv.1-2). So He told those stories to emphasize God's love for people who are lost in sin. God has more than enough love to go around. Besides, those who are "well" and are not "lost" experience the Father's love as fully as those to whom He gives special attention (v.31).

Father, forgive us for feeling slighted when You shower Your love on needy sinners. Help us to see how needy we are and to abide in Your boundless love. —Mart De Haan

*The One who made the heavens,
Who died on Calvary,
Rejoices with His angels
When sinners are set free. —Fasick*

**God loves every one of us as if there were
but one of us to love. —Augustine**

September 24
Friday

GOD'S APPOINTMENTS

READ:
Proverbs 16:1-9

A man's heart plans
his way, but the LORD
directs his steps.
—Proverbs 16:9

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Song of Solomon 4-5
■ Galatians 3

and Paul met amid the antique splendors of ancient Rome. . . . No, our meetings are no more by chance than the meeting of Stanley and Livingstone in Central Africa."

We should begin each day with a sincere desire to please the Lord, gladly anticipating His appointments for us. They may be circumstances that are unplanned, or the people we meet unexpectedly. But we should welcome them as opportunities to witness, to serve others, and to grow spiritually.

Recognizing God's sovereign leading, let us rejoice in His appointments. —Richard De Haan

*All things work out for good, we know—
Such is God's great design;
He orders all our steps below
For purposes divine. —Peterson*

Life-changing events do not happen by accident. They are not determined by the stars. They are not by chance. There is no such thing as chance. The Lord uses every situation in life to accomplish His purposes.

Frank W. Boreham (1871-1959), British pastor and essayist, said, "It was not by chance that Elijah and Ahab met on the grassy slopes of Carmel. It was not by chance that Herod and John met on the highways in Galilee. It was not by chance that Pilate and Jesus met in the judgment hall at Jerusalem. It was not by chance that Peter and Cornelius met on the Syrian seaboard. It was not by chance that Philip and the Ethiopian met on the sandy road to Gaza. It was not by chance that Nero

**The stops of a good man are ordered by the Lord
as well as his steps. —Müller**

September 25
Saturday

"HE'S IN HEAVEN"

READ:
2 Corinthians 5:1-8

For to me, to live is
Christ, and to die is
gain.
—Philippians 1:21

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Song of Solomon 6-8
■ Galatians 4

But how reassuring to hear that those dear saints of God are in heaven. What joy to know that when believers in Christ die, they are instantly with Jesus! The apostle Paul put it like this: "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). No more pain. No more sadness. No more sin. Only peace. Only joy. Only glory.

We still grieve when a believing loved one dies. Grief is love's expression. But beneath it all is an unshakable joy, because we know our loved one is in heaven. —Dave Egner

Friends will be there I have loved long ago,

Joy like a river around me will flow;

Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know

Will through the ages be glory for me. —Gabriel

On August 28, 2003, my good friend Kurt De Haan, the former managing editor of *Our Daily Bread*, died of a heart attack while on his lunchtime run. When I learned the news, I said to myself, "He's in heaven," which brought me great comfort.

A few days later I was talking with my former pastor Roy Williamson, now in his eighties. I asked him about a man from our congregation. "He's in heaven," he said. I also inquired about another person. "She's in heaven too," he replied. Then, eyes twinkling, he said, "I know more people in heaven than I do on earth."

Later I was thinking about Pastor Williamson's words. He could have simply said, "He died," or "She died."

**God's children never say goodbye
for the last time.**

September 26
Sunday

A LESSON IN PRAISE

READ:
Psalm 150

Praise the LORD!
— Psalm 150:1

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 1-2
■ Galatians 5

Psalm 150 is not only a beautiful expression of praise, it's also a lesson in praising the Lord. It tells us where to praise, why we're to praise, how we're to praise, and who should offer praise.

Where do we praise? In God's "sanctuary" and "mighty firmament" (v.1). Wherever we are in the world is a proper place to praise the One who created all things.

Why do we praise? First, because of what God does. He performs "mighty acts." Second, because of who God is. The psalmist praised Him for "His excellent greatness" (v.2). The all-powerful Creator is the Sustainer of the universe.

How should we praise? Loudly. Softly. Soothingly. Enthusiastically. Rhythmically. Boldly. Unexpectedly. Fearlessly. In other words, we can praise God in many ways and on many occasions (vv.3-5).

Who should praise? "Everything that has breath" (v.6). Young and old. Rich and poor. Weak and strong. Every living creature. God's will is for everyone to whom He gave the breath of life to use that breath to acknowledge His power and greatness.

Praise is our enthusiastic expression of gratitude to God for reigning in glory forever. — Julie Ackerman Link

*Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honors to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud amen!* — Watts

Praise is the overflow of a joyful heart.

September 27
Monday

GOD'S TENDER CARE

READ:
Psalm 31:1-14

You have considered
my trouble; You have
known my soul in
adversities.
—Psalm 31:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 3-4
■ Galatians 6

burdening Him, draws out His tender compassion. He knows the troubles of our soul (v.7). And He cares. Thus we can commit our spirit into His hand (v.5), as our Lord Jesus did when all forsook Him and fled.

Poet Frank Graeff asks, "Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth and song; as the burdens press, and the cares distress, and the way grows weary and long?" The answer? Yes! He invites us to give our burdens and cares to Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7).

Trust God to care for you today. —David Roper

O yes, He cares—I know He cares!

His heart is touched with my grief;

When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,

I know my Savior cares! —Graeff

During a time of grief, C. S. Lewis observed that his neighbors walked across the street to avoid him when they saw him approaching.

David too knew a time of grief when he said, "I am a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors . . . I am forgotten like a dead man" (Psalm 31:11-12).

Perhaps you've known times when friends seem to forget you in your sorrow. They fail to call, or write, or promise to pray.

But those are the times when we can sense God's tenderness most deeply. When the days are long and lonely and no one seems to care, He seeks us out and surrounds us with lovingkindness. Our sorrow, far from

We can never get beyond the circle of God's care.

September 28
Tuesday

THINK TOGETHER

READ:
Philippians 4:4-13

If there is any virtue
and if there is anything
praiseworthy—meditate
on these things.
—Philippians 4:8

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

- Isaiah 5-6
- Ephesians 1

to meditate on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (4:8). What would happen if we began this kind of thinking together in our churches and homes? Might we discover creative, God-given approaches to problems that seem to defy solution? Would our perspective on life undergo a radical change?

“Meditate on these things” is a great command. Obeying it with our families and other believers could open doors of discovery for helping others, serving God, and living for Him. Now that’s something to think about! —David McCasland

Lord, help us to think of the right and the true,

The pure and the noble—it all points to You;

For if we consider what’s worthy of praise,

We’ll then want to live for You all of our days. —Fitzhugh

An executive of the world’s largest toymaker said, “We are such a machine in terms of what we deliver on an annual basis that it doesn’t allow time to think.”

In an effort to stimulate creativity, this company is taking selected employees out of corporate headquarters and encouraging them to think together in new ways. For instance, when asked to devise a method to prevent an egg from breaking if dropped from 14 feet, one group went beyond the conventional approach of trying to cushion its fall and created an egg bungee cord.

What about us? Are our lives so focused on activity and production that we don’t take time to think? In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he told them

Right thinking leads to right living.

September 29
Wednesday

A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS

READ:

John 15:1-14

You shall love the
LORD your God with
all your heart, with all
your soul, with all your
mind, and with all
your strength.
—Mark 12:30

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 7-8

■ Ephesians 2

A Harvard Business School professor wrote an open letter to the nation's graduates. He told them that in one sense they needed to forget what they had learned in school. He said that schools tend to put too much emphasis on the idea that success comes as a result of passing tests. The professor pointed out that in the workplace doing well depends largely on learning to succeed in what he called a "web of relationships"—the ability to cooperate with others and function as an effective team.

This truth also applies to living the Christian life. We often think that spiritual maturity and success result from how much we know about biblical facts and principles.

Jesus showed us, however, that real success comes from something else—from loving one another in the same way He loved us. He made it clear that we can do this only if we "abide" in Him (John 15:7). This means that we must stay close to Him through prayer and willingly obey His commands (v.10). Our web of relationships must extend first to God and then to others.

The secret of spiritual success is not just in acquiring individual knowledge—it's in combining that knowledge with love in all our relationships. —Mart De Haan

*Lord, help us learn from what You did
When You lived on this earth;
You spread Your love to all You met—
You gave each one true worth. —Branon*

**As Christians draw close to Christ,
they draw closer to one another.**

September 30
Thursday

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

READ:
Psalm 119:129-136

The entrance of Your
words gives light; it
gives understanding
to the simple.
—Psalm 119:130

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 9-10
■ Ephesians 3

After a woman sued a fast-food restaurant for being burned by coffee, companies started changing their manuals and warning labels. Check out these instructions:

- On a frozen dinner: DEFROST BEFORE EATING
- On an iron: CAUTION! DO NOT IRON CLOTHES ON BODY
- On a peanut butter jar: MAY CONTAIN PEANUTS
- On a milk bottlecap: AFTER OPENING, KEEP UPRIGHT

If some people need these obvious guidelines on household items, think about how much more we need God's direction. Psalm 119 tells of the importance of His instruction manual—the Bible. On the pages of Scripture we find what God wants us *to believe, to be, and to do.*

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Ask the Lord to teach you His statutes and to direct your steps according to His Word (Psalm 119:133,135). Then read it often and follow the instructions. —Anne Cetas

*Give us, O Lord, a strong desire
To look within Your Word each day;
Help us to hide it in our heart,*

Lest from its truth our feet would stray. —Branon

**Scripture is meant to give us protection,
correction, and direction.**

10 Reasons To Believe God Gives The Perfect Gift

1. God loves to give gifts.

Long before we took our first breath, our Creator showed Himself to be a great giver of everything a man or woman could ask for. Today, He still wants to give us the desires of our heart (Psalm 37:4). Yet His best offer is so priceless and so perfectly suited to our needs, many think it's too good to be true.

2. It's described in the Bible.

The Bible describes a wonderfully mysterious gift that goes far beyond anything we've ever received. But does God offer to give us the desires of our heart as a reward for good living? No, the Bible refers to this spiritual package as *salvation* and calls it "the gift of God" (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

3. It cannot be earned.

God's perfect gift of salvation comes not by merit but by mercy, not by trying but by trusting. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

4. God paid for it Himself.

God gave us the freedom to accept or reject Him; our first parents walked away from Him. God revealed a plan of rescue whereby an innocent victim would die on behalf of the guilty. He did what can only be explained by love—He sacrificed His Son to pay for our sin (John 1:29; Hebrews 10:5-10).

5. It comes with a proof of purchase.

The receipt we hold for His payment is the record of history. Jewish prophets predicted a Messiah who would deliver His people from sin (Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:26). The Gospels tell us that He healed the sick, raised the dead, and gave hope to the oppressed. Instead of riding to power on the shoulders of adoring crowds, He voluntarily died at the hands of Roman executioners. Three days later, He walked out of a guarded tomb

10 Reasons To Believe God Gives The Perfect Gift, continued

(Luke 24:1-7). Eyewitnesses of the risen Christ died at the hands of enemies rather than deny they had seen Him alive.

6. It was wrapped with care.

The Lord visited a young woman named Mary and miraculously wrapped Himself in her womb. When all seemed lost, God wrapped His gift in the reports of witnesses who told of a resurrection from the dead. For a final touch, the Creator gave His gift a colorful bow of diversity—people from every nation whose hearts have been changed by His love (Revelation 5:9).

7. God offers it by grace.

The apostle Paul described the difference between Adam, who spread death to all his descendants, and Christ, who brought life to all who trust Him. "If by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many" (Romans 5:15).

8. It can be received only through faith.

God comes only where He's invited. The One who wants us to share the happiness of His eternal family knocks gently at the door of our heart, waiting for us to welcome Him into our life (John 1:12).

9. It's available to anyone willing to receive it.

Most of Jesus' best friends were fishermen, not scholars. One was a tax collector. One had been possessed by demons. One sold her body for a living. What they had in common was their willingness to accept the gift of God.

10. It inspires gratitude.

Those who've been saved from a burning building know what it means to live with a deep sense of gratitude. Those who know they've been rescued by God's grace from the fires of judgment live out of their gratefulness to God (Ephesians 2:10).

October 1
Friday

LIFTING A BURDEN

READ:
Genesis 45:1-15

Do not therefore be
grieved or angry with
yourselves because you
sold me.
—Genesis 45:5

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 11-13
■ Ephesians 4

regret anymore. Last year, Wickersham wrote the umpire a note, telling him he was right in his decision and that he held no hard feelings. That note lifted a weight from Valentine's shoulders.

In Genesis 45, Joseph lifted a burden of guilt from his brothers, who had sold him into slavery—something far more serious than a simple misunderstanding. Yet he was willing to forgive them.

Is there someone who needs to hear a forgiving word from you that would lift a burden of regret? —Dave Branon

Let me forget the hurt and pain

Found along life's way;

Let me remember kindnesses

Given day by day. —Berry

It was the last weekend of the 1964 baseball season. Bill Valentine was umpiring a game between the Detroit Tigers and the New York Yankees.

Dave Wickersham was pitching for Detroit, and he had 19 victories for the season. One more would be a sign of stardom. But it wasn't to be.

After a close play, Wickersham tapped the umpire on the shoulder to ask for a time-out. Touching an umpire is against the rules, so Valentine tossed Wickersham from the game—depriving him of his chance for a 20-win season.

For the next 39 years, Valentine lived with a gnawing regret for booting the pitcher in that split-second decision. But he doesn't carry that

**Ground filled with the roots of bitterness
needs to be plowed by the grace of God.**

October 2
Saturday

"WRECK" A BIBLE

READ:
2 Timothy 3:10-17

All Scripture is given
by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for
doctrine, for reproof,
for correction, for
instruction.

—2 Timothy 3:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 14-16

■ Ephesians 5:1-16

would be to stop folk from digging into the Bible."

Do you use your Bible every day until it eventually falls apart? Bible teacher Alan Redpath advised believers to "wreck" a Bible every 10 years. Here's why: God wants to speak to us through the Bible, telling us how to live for Him and answering crucial questions. Through it He warns us about the dangers of sin and provides us with nourishing spiritual food.

Don't neglect your Bible. If you do, you will neglect your own spiritual health. —Joanie Yoder

The treasures of the Word of God

Are great beyond compare;

But if we do not search them out,

We cannot use what's there. —Sper

The Bible is a remarkable book. Millions of copies are bought each year. It has been the number-one bestseller for decades. But tragically, the Bible is said to be the least-read bestseller of all time.

The apostle Paul taught that the Scriptures are given to us by God and are capable of bringing about transformation in those who take it seriously (2 Timothy 3:16). Evangelist and preacher D. L. Moody said, "The Scriptures were not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."

So why do we often neglect this source of transforming power? Writer and professor J. I. Packer said, "If I were the devil, one of my first aims

A well-worn Bible is a sign of a well-fed soul.

October 3
Sunday

DON'T DESPAIR, SHARE

READ:
2 Peter 3

Be diligent to be
found by Him in
peace, without spot
and blameless.
—2 Peter 3:14

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 17-19
■ Ephesians 5:17-33

During these days of horrific world events, Christians should be appalled but not taken by surprise. Jesus forewarned us of terrible times to come (Luke 21:25-28). In today's reading, Peter reassured believers by reminding them of God's unfolding purposes and final victory.

The apostle described ungodly scoffers, who in the last days will say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). We too may wonder why Christ doesn't come back and change things now. Peter affirmed that the Lord "is not slack concerning His promise," but delays His return to give people everywhere more time to repent (v.9).

We mustn't forget that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (v.8). Eventually the day of the Lord will come, bringing a judgment of consuming fire. This will be followed by a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness and of God's forgiven people (v.13).

As we anticipate that triumphant day, we must live consistent, holy lives (v.14), resist all evil influences (v.17), and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (v.18). Then, instead of despairing over evil, we will be able to share the good news of Jesus with the world. —Joanie Yoder

*We know not when the Lord may come
To right the wrongs of this old earth,
But this we know—He's left us here
To share good news of second birth. —Hess*

**We don't know what this world is coming to,
but we know the One who is coming to this world.**

October 4
Monday

BUT IF NOT . . .

READ:
Daniel 3:1-18

We do not serve
your gods, nor will we
worship the gold image
which you have set up.
—Daniel 3:18

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 20-22
■ Ephesians 6

I recall a Sunday school lesson from nearly 40 years ago in which we were taught to love God in spite of our circumstances. Loving God is easy when He grants our requests and provides what we desire. Loving Him in difficult circumstances tests our faith.

In Daniel 3, we read of the life-and-death decision Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego had to make. If they chose to worship the golden image, they would live; if they refused, death was certain. They answered King Nebuchadnezzar: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace . . . But if not, . . . we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (vv.17-18).

Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego lacking in faith when they said "but if not"? No. They knew God was fully capable of delivering them from the fiery furnace.

There's a lesson in this for all of us. Is God all-powerful? Yes. Is He able to deliver us from all our problems? Yes. Does God always deliver us from our difficulties? No.

We may not fully comprehend God's purpose in our difficulty and suffering, but we must not cease to love Him. We must trust Him and hope in Him in spite of the trials that threaten to overwhelm us. —Albert Lee

*I have learned to love my Savior,
And I trust Him more each day;
For no matter what the trial,
He will always be my stay. —Hess*

**Genuine faith stays strong
when deliverance seems distant.**

October 5
Tuesday

WATCHING THE WIND

READ:
Acts 8:26-34

He who observes the
wind will not sow, and
he who regards the
clouds will not reap.
—Ecclesiastes 11:4

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 23–25
■ Philippians 1

When it comes to telling others about Jesus, I'm sometimes like a cautious farmer who keeps his eye on the weather, looking for the perfect day to plant his crops. The season passes and he sows nothing. The opportunity is gone; the harvest is lost (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

I hesitate and wonder, "Is this person ready to listen to the gospel? Is this the time to speak?" You can never tell what's going on in the depths of another person's heart. Some may be dwelling in darkness yet longing for someone to lead them into the light.

The Ethiopian eunuch in his royal chariot seemed to have it all together (Acts 8:27). He enjoyed prestige, wealth, and power, yet inwardly he was empty and searching. He was reading Isaiah's promise of the suffering Savior and trying to come to grips with his words. Right at that moment, Philip took the opportunity to tell the eunuch about Jesus (v.35).

I have a friend who often leads people to Jesus. I asked him once how he knew they were ready to receive the gospel. "It's easy," he replied. "I ask them."

So I must stop worrying about the wind and the clouds and get on with it—scattering the seed wherever I go, regardless of the weather. You just never know. —David Roper

Toiling through the changing seasons

In the sunshine and the rain,

Zealous sowing with compassion

Yields a wealth of golden grain. —Anon.

Sowing the seed of God's Word is never out of season.

October 6
Wednesday

GOD OF THE HILLS & STREETS

READ:
Psalm 121

The LORD shall preserve
your going out and
your coming in from
this time forth, and
even forevermore.
—Psalm 121:8

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 26–27
■ Philippians 2

The 121st Psalm was a favorite of my father. The Scottish people called it “The Traveler’s Psalm.” Whenever a family member, a guest, or a friend was leaving on a journey, this psalm was read—or more often sung—at family prayers. When my father left the “old country” alone as a teenager to come to the United States, he was bidden farewell with this psalm.

Over the years, my father enjoyed many hearty days and endured others that were dark and grim. He carried this psalm’s words with him into battle during World War I, and then out of it as he lay in a hospital for almost a year recovering from shrapnel wounds.

In verse 1, the psalmist looked beyond the hills to the God who made them. My father lived in the toughest section of New York City. Although he seldom saw hills, he held to the assurance that the God of the hills was the God of the dangerous streets as well.

How many “goings out” and “comings in” my father made in his 87 years! And when he went out for the last time, I believe he was singing Psalm 121 as he descended into the valley and traveled home to the other side.

How reassuring that the God of the hills and the streets goes before every believer in Christ! —Haddon Robinson

*He will ever keep thy soul,
What would harm He will control;
In the home and by the way
He will keep thee day by day.* —Psalter

**Because God is with us,
we need not fear what lies ahead.**

October 7
Thursday

BECOMING WHAT WE ARE

READ:
Philippians 3:1-11

The Lord is the Spirit;
and where the Spirit
of the Lord is, there
is liberty.
—2 Corinthians 3:17

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 28-29
■ Philippians 3

At a British university, a group of students had raised the question, "What do you want to be?" Different answers were given—a champion athlete, an influential politician, a noted scholar. Shyly, yet clearly, one student said something that caused thoughtful silence: "You may laugh at me, but I want to be a saint."

Imagine—a saint! Whatever his concept of sainthood, many in our secular society would view that ambition as eccentric. Yet if we are Christians, it ought to be the highest priority of our life. The essence of sainthood is simply to be like Jesus. Paul said that the overarching purpose of God the Father is to make us like His Son (Romans 8:29).

Of course, every believer is guaranteed perfect conformity to Christ in the world to come. But God does not want us to wait passively until we enter heaven for that supernatural transformation to take place (1 John 3:2). We are to be co-operating with the Holy Spirit to grow more and more like Christ "in this world" (4:17).

Yes, we are already saints by faith in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1). But each day we face the challenge of becoming what we are—Christlike in every area of our lives. —Vernon Grounds

*More like the Master I would live and grow,
More of His love to others I would show;
More self-denial, like His in Galilee,
More like the Master I long to ever be. —Gabriel*

**To belong to Christ is to be a saint;
to live like a saint is to be like Christ.**

October 8
Friday

COME TO ME

READ:
John 6:30-40

I am the bread of life.
He who comes to Me
shall never hunger.
—John 6:35

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 30-31
■ Philipians 4

Wisdom. We need wisdom beyond our own for making decisions. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Strength. When we're weary, "the LORD will give strength to His people" (Psalm 29:11).

Abundant Life. The fullest life is found in a relationship with Jesus. "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). *Come!* —Anne Cetas

*Jesus is calling to those who are weary,
And He is calling the thirsty ones too;
If for the Bread of Life you now hunger,
Hear His sweet voice saying, "Come." —Hess*

When Jesus lived on this earth, He invited people to come to Him, and He still does today (John 6:35). But what do He and His Father in heaven have that we need?

Salvation. Jesus is the only way to have forgiveness of sin and the promise of heaven. "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15).

Purpose. We are to give all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength to following Jesus. "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

Comfort. In trial or sorrow, the "God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Jesus invites us to come to Him for life.

October 9
Saturday

SINLESS ANGER

READ:
Proverbs 15:1-18

"Be angry, and do not sin": Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.
—Ephesians 4:26

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 32-33
■ Colossians 1

When Supreme Court Justice Byron White was in Salt Lake City to give a speech, he was attacked by an angry man. The suspect said he assaulted the respected judge because of his High Court decisions. He said, "Justice White is causing four-letter words to come into my living room through the TV set." Rationalizing his attack, he continued, "The only way I know how to stop it is to go to the source."

That's where the man went wrong. Of course, he had a perfect right to voice his strong opinions. He was even justified in becoming angry if he believed a Court decision encouraged immorality. But the manner he chose to express his indignation was as bad

as, if not worse than, a wrong court decision.

Today's Scripture text says, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). What others say and do may arouse our anger and in some cases should make us angry. But we must be careful we don't overreact and lose control. The apostle Paul reminded us that "though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Should Christians ever become angry? Certainly! But we should never allow our anger to erupt in a sinful response. Two wrongs don't make a right. —Richard De Haan

When anger stirs within our hearts

Because of wrongs we see,

We must with love address the fault

If helpful we would be. —Branon

It's not a sin to get angry when you get angry at sin.

October 10
Sunday

HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY

READ:
Proverbs 11:24-31

Let each one give as he
purposes in his heart,
not grudgingly or of
necessity; for God loves
a cheerful giver.
—2 Corinthians 9:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 34-36
■ Colossians 2

looks for someone who would be blessed by receiving a gift. "By constantly looking for an opportunity to give," he says, "I have a wonderful day."

The old saying "Takers eat well, but givers sleep well" is only partially true. According to Proverbs 11:25, givers also eat well: "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."

We must not give grudgingly or merely out of a sense of duty but from the heart. It's the generous, cheerful giver whom God loves (2 Corinthians 9:7). —Joanie Yoder

*Give as you would to the Master
If you met His searching look;
Give as you would of your substance
If His hand the offering took. —Anon.*

After admiring a painting in a woman's home, I was surprised by her generosity when she took it down and gave it to me.

I've seen many similar acts of kindness. For years, my mother-in-law hung on to her archaic-looking refrigerator so she could give more money to the Lord's work.

A Christian family I know had saved money to buy a new car. But when they heard of a desperate need on a mission field, they kept their old car and gave to missions instead.

I've also heard of a Christian businessman in Ohio who puts something in his pocket every morning to give away—a pen, a trinket, even a ten-dollar bill. As the day unfolds, he

**Many people readily give God credit,
but few cheerfully give Him cash.**

October 11
Monday

HYPOCRITICAL REQUEST

READ:
Matthew 16:1-4

A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.
—Matthew 16:4

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 37-38
■ Colossians 3

A group of religious leaders asked Jesus to give them a “sign from heaven” (Matthew 16:1). They had witnessed many of His miracles, but they had either minimized them or attributed them to Satan. The Pharisees were now demanding that Jesus perform another miracle—perhaps like Joshua who commanded the sun and moon to stand still (Joshua 10:12-14), or like Elijah who called down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:30-40). They did this to test Jesus.

Seeing their hypocrisy, Jesus said that while they could make weather predictions by looking at the sky, they were unable to read the much clearer “signs of the times” revealed in His ministry of teaching and healing (v.3).

Some people have told me they would believe in Jesus if He showed them miracles like those in the Gospels. But what makes them think they would react any differently than the religious leaders of Jesus’ day?

Anyone who sincerely seeks the truth has all the evidence necessary for faith. The resurrection of Jesus is a historically credible event. The power of the risen Christ can be seen in many of His followers. The New Testament speaks to the mind and heart of every sincere, seeking soul. To ask for more is a hypocritical request. —Herb Vander Lugt

FOR FURTHER STUDY

*To learn about the evidence that Jesus is alive, read
10 Reasons To Believe Christ Rose From The Dead
online at www.rbc.net/rtb/8rsn*

**Demanding a miracle to believe in Jesus
ignores the evidence of His resurrection.**

October 12
Tuesday

HELP WANTED!

READ:

2 Timothy 2:1-13

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. —Matthew 16:24

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 39–40

■ Colossians 4

cross, and follow Me." The Lord was calling people to go with Him on a hazardous journey—the way of the cross. He issued that call after telling His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and be killed.

Through the centuries, thousands have responded to Jesus' words by forsaking all to follow Him. But unlike Shackleton's expedition that came to an end, the Lord's work goes on and volunteers are still needed. He continues to call for those who will serve Him regardless of the cost.

Have you answered His call? —Richard De Haan

*Never came the call more clear,
Midst the storms of hate and fear,
Jesus' love to show in this world of woe;
For His grace is ever near.* —Loes

Perhaps the most effective advertisement ever written appeared in a London newspaper early in the 20th century: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger. Safe return doubtful." Those were the words written by Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous South Pole explorer.

Commenting on the overwhelming response he received, Shackleton said, "It seemed as though all the men in Great Britain were determined to accompany us."

Shackleton's words remind me of Jesus' words in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his

**A faith that costs nothing and demands nothing
is worth nothing.**

October 13
Wednesday

WITNESS FROM A WHEELCHAIR

READ:

Matthew 25:31-40

The Son of Man did
not come to be served,
but to serve.

—Matthew 20:28

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 41-42

■ 1 Thessalonians 1

A woman named Nancy put this ad in her local newspaper: "If you are lonely or have a problem, call me. I am in a wheelchair and seldom get out. We can share our problems with each other. Just call. I'd love to talk." The response to that ad was surprising—30 calls or more every week.

What motivated this woman to reach out from her wheelchair to help others in need? Nancy explained that before her paralysis she had been perfectly healthy but in deep despair. She had tried to commit suicide by jumping from her apartment window, but her fall left her paralyzed from the waist down.

In the hospital, utterly frustrated, she sensed that Jesus said, "Nancy, you've had a healthy body but a crippled soul. From now on you will have a crippled body but a healthy soul." As a result of that experience, she surrendered her life to Christ. When she was finally allowed to go home, she prayed for a way to share God's grace with others, and the idea of the newspaper ad occurred to her.

Every believer can do something to help others. Limited as we may be by sickness, old age, or disability, we can still pray, call, or write. No matter what our condition, we can be effective witnesses for Jesus. —Vernon Grounds

Lord, let me be a shining light

So others then may view

Your mercy and Your love displayed

In all I say and do. —Sper

**Only after talking to God about people
are we ready to talk to people about God.**

October 14
Thursday

WHOLENESS OF LIFE

READ:
Mark 2:1-12

Son, your sins are forgiven you. . . . Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.
—Mark 2:5,11

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 43-44
■ 1 Thessalonians 2

A social worker told her colleagues about a young boy in an urban ghetto who appeared to be little more than a bit of twisted human flesh. He had been struck by a car several months before and had not received proper medical attention.

Although not part of her caseload, the social worker took the boy to an orthopedist, who performed surgery on his legs. Two years later the boy walked into her office without crutches. His recovery was complete. The two embraced. "If I accomplish nothing else in my life," said the social worker to herself, "I have made a real difference with at least this one!"

She paused, then said to her colleagues, "This was all several years ago now. Where do you think that boy is today?" Some suggested that he might be a school teacher, others a physician or a social worker. With deep emotion, the woman responded, "No, he's in the penitentiary for one of the foulest crimes a human can commit. I was instrumental in teaching him how to walk again, but there was no one to teach him where to walk."

We must point people to Jesus. Through Him, those with broken bodies, broken dreams, broken homes, and broken hearts receive wholeness of life. —Haddon Robinson

Lord, help us to tell of Your love for mankind—

A love for the sin-sick, the broken, the blind;

And help them to see by the way that we live

A wholeness of being that You long to give. —D. De Haan

**A person may go wrong in many different directions
but right in only one.**

October 15
Friday

ORDINARY PEOPLE

READ:

Deuteronomy 4:5-14

Take heed to yourself,
... lest you forget the
things your eyes have
seen And teach
them to your children.
—Deuteronomy 4:9

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 45-46

■ 1 Thessalonians 3

David Isay, a radio producer, says that in a culture inundated with the stories of celebrities, we need to hear the recorded voices of ordinary people, because their lives and contributions are no less important. Isay is a driving force behind StoryCorps, "a national project to instruct and inspire people to record each other's stories in sound."

It's a great concept, especially for Christians. Think what it would mean for your great-great-grandchildren to hear you telling the story of your life—describing the people and events that shaped you and explaining what Christ means to you.

Just before God's people entered the Promised Land, Moses told them:

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

That same responsibility of face-to-face communication is still ours. Yet we have the unusual opportunity of leaving a message for future generations. Begin recording your own uniquely important story. Or help a friend or relative record his or hers. There is great value in the stories of ordinary people who know and love the Lord. —David McCasland

*Life's truest heroes never carve their name
On marble columns built for their acclaim;
They build instead a legacy that springs
From faithful service to the King of kings. —Gustafson*

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

October 16
Saturday

GLAD TO GET HOME!

READ:
Revelation 21:1-5

Here we have no
continuing city, but we
seek the one to come.
—Hebrews 13:14

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 47-49

■ 1 Thessalonians 4

were in the ditch. Then all at once we were enveloped by a brief whiteout. Believe me, it was frightening. After a slow, tedious journey, we finally reached Grand Rapids and pulled into our driveway. I think every member of the family said, "I'm sure glad to get home!"

I wonder if we'll have a similar feeling when we enter heaven. The dangerous "whiteouts" of our earthly journey will be over. The temptations, stresses, and failures will all be in the past. Best of all, we'll be safe with our Savior.

Yes, we'll be so glad to get home! —Dave Egner

When we all get to heaven,

What a day of rejoicing that will be!

When we all see Jesus,

We'll sing and shout the victory. —Hewitt

In wintertime, a condition known as a "whiteout" sometimes occurs along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The air becomes so filled with powdery snow that you can't see more than a few feet ahead. You feel totally helpless, especially if you're driving, and that's what we were doing on a bitterly cold December day.

Our family had been invited to my sister's house for Christmas dinner. As we headed west toward Lake Michigan, the weather became treacherous, but we made it to our destination. Later, however, as we were driving home after dark, the situation grew even worse. The expressway was covered with ice, traffic slowed to a crawl, and several cars

Heaven for the Christian is best spelled H-O-M-E.

October 17
Sunday

ACTIVE WORSHIP

READ:
Psalm 100

Enter into His gates
with thanksgiving,
and into His courts
with praise.
—Psalm 100:4

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 50–52
■ 1 Thessalonians 5

In his book *Folk Psalms of Faith*, Pastor Ray Stedman says he wishes that all churchgoers could stand in the pulpit on a Sunday morning and watch the faces in the congregation during the sermon.

Although most people seem to give the minister their attention, many have their minds elsewhere. Stedman writes, "It would be fascinating at the end of a service to know where everybody had been!"

To receive the greatest benefit from a church service, we must prepare our hearts and become active participants. We must become wholeheartedly involved in singing the hymns, silently praying as the pastor leads the congregation in prayer, and worshiping from the heart as the choir sings.

Finally, we need to discipline ourselves to listen intently with a receptive heart to the teaching of God's Word. We must develop a hunger for truth that quiets our spirits, inspires worship, evokes praise to God, and moves us to serve Him.

It's easy to blame the pastor if we leave the service feeling empty and discouraged. But he's just one participant; we must do our part. Those who get the most out of worship are those who put the most into it. —Richard De Haan

*The house of God should be a place
For praise and reverent prayer,
Where holy thoughts our spirits fill
Each time we enter there. —Bosch*

The heart of worship is worship from the heart.

October 18
Monday

FREE PRAYER

READ:
Ephesians 6:10-20

Praying always with all
prayer and supplication
in the Spirit, being
watchful to this end
with all perseverance.
—Ephesians 6:18

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 53-55
■ 2 Thessalonians 1

A pastor was asked to call on a woman in a psychiatric hospital and pray for her. After his visit, he thought how good it would be for somebody to go there regularly and pray for the residents. The "somebody" turned out to be him. On a table in one of the wards, he put up a sign saying "Free Prayer." Later he recalled, "Suddenly I had 15 people standing in line to get prayed for."

People often ask for our prayers, but do we faithfully pray for them? Many times we see others in great need but find it easier to discuss their plight with friends rather than to intercede for them. But people need and want our prayers.

Paul concluded his call to put on "the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13-17) by writing, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (v.18).

Oswald Chambers often referred to prayer as "the ministry of the interior" and said, "There is no snare, or any danger of infatuation or pride in intercession; it is a hidden ministry that brings forth fruit whereby the Father is glorified."

Faithful prayer—whether in public or private—is one of the greatest gifts we can give others. —David McCasland

*To give to others what they need,
We show no greater care
Than when we give them to the Lord,
Upholding them in prayer. —D. De Haan*

**Our intercession may be the key
to God's intervention.**

October 19
Tuesday

A GOOD DAY TO DIE?

READ:

1 Kings 19:1-18

It is enough! Now,
LORD, take my life!
—1 Kings 19:4

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 56-58

■ 2 Thessalonians 2

wilderness (1 Kings 19:4). There he "prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life!'"

We may think that Elijah was overreacting, but hopeless feelings are real. He wisely went to the right source for help—he cried out to God. The Lord knew Elijah needed restoration, so He provided for his needs (vv.5-7). He revealed Himself to him (vv.9-13) and renewed Elijah's sense of purpose by giving him work to do (vv.15-17). God brought him hope by reminding him that he was not alone (v.18).

Look to God. He is your source of hope. —Anne Cetas

*Lord, give us grace to trust You when
Life's burdens seem too much to bear;
Dispel the darkness with new hope
And help us rise above despair. —Sper*

Hopelessness and anger combined to bring death to a young man in my neighborhood. Someone had beaten him up for something he said. To retaliate, he came back with a gun. The police were called. When they arrived he ran, shooting at them. To protect everyone, they shot him. He lost his life at age 21. Later it was reported that he had told a family member that morning: "Today would be a good day to die." I wonder what brought him to such despair.

There was a day when the prophet Elijah felt hopeless and wanted to die. He had just experienced a great victory over the prophets of Baal, but now his life was being threatened by the king's wife Jezebel. In fear, he ran into the

No one is hopeless whose hope is in God.

October 20
Wednesday

A GIFT OF GRACE

READ:

2 Corinthians 8:7-15

You know the grace
of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that though He
was rich, yet for your
sakes He became poor.
—2 Corinthians 8:9

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 59–61

■ 2 Thessalonians 3

The most inspiring acts of human love are only a shadow of the immeasurable gift our Savior has given us. Paul wrote, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ left His glory in heaven and died on the cross for our sin so that we could be forgiven through faith in Him. His sacrifice was based on His love, not on our merit. All we are and all we have are the Savior's loving gifts of grace to us. —David McCasland

*God gives His grace so rich, so free—
No one will He deny;
For He has promised in His Word
An infinite supply. —D. De Haan*

Grace is an unearned blessing to unworthy sinners.

In high schools in the US, being elected homecoming queen is a great honor for any young woman. But when a high school near Houston, Texas, crowned Shannon Jones, it was a special moment for her and for everyone in the community. Nineteen-year-old Shannon, who is an award-winning athlete and an active member of her church youth group, has Down syndrome.

Shannon knew this once-in-a-lifetime experience was a gift from her younger sister Lindsey, who was the catalyst to elect her. Their dad said, "I'm so proud of Lindsey. Probably somewhere in the back of her mind, this is something she'd like to do." But she made it happen for Shannon.

October 21
Thursday

NO UNKIND WORDS

READ:

Ephesians 4:29-32

Let no corrupt word
proceed out of your
mouth, but what is
good for necessary
edification.

—Ephesians 4:29

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Isaiah 62-64

■ 1 Timothy 1

One of the greatest honors ever offered to me came during one of life's saddest times.

I was heartbroken last year when my good friend and co-worker Kurt De Haan died suddenly while out on his regular lunchtime run. Kurt was managing editor of *Our Daily Bread* from 1989 until the time of his death. Losing him was a huge blow to each of us at RBC Ministries, but his wife Mary and their four children were suffering the worst pain.

A couple of days before the funeral, I got a call from Mary, who asked if I would share a eulogy of Kurt. I was overwhelmed with this bittersweet privilege.

As I reflected on Kurt's life, one trait continued to surface. It was a remarkable characteristic, and it was something that I focused on in my eulogy. In the 22 years I had known him, worked with him, and talked with him, I never once heard Kurt say a negative word about any other person.

What a remarkable legacy of a true Christian heart! Kurt lived up to the standard of Ephesians 4:29-32. He sought to build up others, showing kindness and tenderheartedness instead of bitterness and malice.

Will others be able to say the same about us? —Dave Branon

Instead of hurling angry words

That wound and stir up strife,

Use words of kindness, filled with love,

That heal and nourish life. —Sper

**A kind word is the oil
that takes the friction out of life.**

October 22
Friday

THE LEMON TREE

READ:
1 John 4:15-19

God is love, and he
who abides in love
abides in God, and
God in him.
—1 John 4:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Isaiah 65-66
■ 1 Timothy 2

"God is love," he said. Author Frederick Buechner wrote, "To say that love is God is romantic idealism. To say that God is love is either the last straw or the ultimate truth."

The last straw? Yes, for some it is. They have looked for love in all the wrong places and have no other place to turn. But when they give themselves to God, as He is made real and personal in Jesus, they find the love they've been looking for all their lives.

God is not indifference, abandonment, and abuse, my friend. God is love. —David Roper

*Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know—
Spirit, breathing from above,
Thou hast taught me it is so. —Robinson*

God's love knows no limits.

People who have given up on love probably agree with the words to the song "Lemon Tree" by the folk group Peter, Paul, and Mary:

*"Don't put your faith in love,
my boy," my father said to me,
"I fear you'll find that love is like the
lovely lemon tree." Lemon tree very
pretty and the lemon flower is sweet
but the fruit of the poor lemon
is impossible to eat.*

Many people feel that way. "Love is bitter," they say, because they've been used or abused. But there is a love that is sweet: "God is love" (1 John 4:16).

The world wants to turn John's phrase around. "Love is God," they say, and seek love as the highest good. But John did not say that love is God.

October 23
Saturday

ZEALOUS FOR GOD

READ:

2 Kings 13:14-19

Epaphras . . . greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers . . . I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you.
—Colossians 4:12-13

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 1-2

■ 1 Timothy 3

We know little about Epaphras except that he was so concerned about the spiritual welfare of the people in Colosse that he is described as “laboring fervently . . . in prayers” for them (Colossians 4:12). When I was a pastor, I saw this kind of enthusiasm in the way new converts prayed and witnessed. But all too often, many of them gradually lost their zeal.

I believe it was King Joash's lack of enthusiasm that made Elisha so angry (2 Kings 13). The monarch had obeyed the dying prophet's command to shoot an arrow toward the east. He had heard Elisha's promise that God would bring his nation complete deliverance from Syria. Joash had obeyed the command to strike the ground with a bundle of arrows, which he did three times. So why did the prophet angrily tell him he should have struck the ground five or six times?

I believe it was because he felt Joash was following his instructions in a half-hearted manner. The king should have been far more enthusiastic in his response to God's wonderful message of victory over Israel's enemies.

The king's nonchalance cost him dearly. He won an incomplete victory. I wonder how many spiritual victories we forfeit because of our lack of zeal. —Herb Vander Lugt

*Let us serve the Lord with gladness
And enthusiastic praise,
Telling all who do not know Him
Of His great and wondrous ways. —Sper*

Godly zeal is love on fire.

October 24
Sunday

KING OF THE APES

READ:
2 Corinthians 10

He who glories, let
him glory in the LORD.
—2 Corinthians 10:17

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 3–5
■ 1 Timothy 4

Studies conducted by the National Geographic Society provide some fascinating insights into the behavior of chimpanzees. Observers noted how the leadership of a chimp community changed because of a dramatic bluff used by one of the lowliest members of the group.

Mike, as he was affectionately known, learned to dominate his chimp establishment with the aid of some empty kerosene cans and a heavy steel box. Hooting loudly, he would bang the metal objects together as he pushed them over the ground. This clamorous behavior frightened the apes so much that the leader surrendered his sovereignty to Mike.

Unfortunately, similar situations may be seen in the church. Those who generate the most activity often receive the greatest attention and honor. But a big program and a flashy personality are not necessarily evidence of divine blessing.

Paul warned against looking “at things according to the outward appearance” (2 Corinthians 10:7). The real measure of our labor is whether it is in keeping with God’s Word and if it reflects His glory rather than our own.

Make sure that whatever you do, you do for the Lord. Then when you glory, it will be in Him! —Mart De Haan

*Help us not to cloud God's glory,
Nor with self His light to dim;
May each thought to Christ be captive,
Emptied to be filled with Him.* —Anon.

You can't glorify yourself and Christ at the same time.

October 25
Monday

WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?

READ:

2 Timothy 4:6-18

I have fought the good
fight, I have finished
the race, I have kept
the faith.

—2 Timothy 4:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 6-8

■ 1 Timothy 5

Many people living in their twilight years suddenly realize how empty and pointless their lives have been. They've made some successful business deals and had some fun, but in terms of satisfying friendships or lasting accomplishments, their lives have been zero. They have climbed the ladder of success, only to discover that all the while it had been leaning against the wrong wall.

As the apostle Paul looked back on his ministry, he saw that it had been rewarding but not easy. Measured by the world's yardstick of success, his life seems almost insignificant.

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while languishing in a cold, damp dungeon awaiting execution. In

a matter of weeks, the apostle would stand before Nero, the half-insane emperor of Rome, and his life would end. But he knew that after his death he would receive the crown of life from the King of kings. And we now know that the influence of his life changed the course of history itself.

An ancient historian would have written volumes about the splendor of Nero and probably never even mentioned Paul. Yet today we name our dogs Nero and our sons Paul. I guess what we live for is pretty important after all.

By the way, what are you living for? —Haddon Robinson

One life to live for Christ my Lord,

One life to do my part,

One life in which to give my all

With fervency of heart. —Brandt

**There are no losers with Jesus
and no winners with the devil.**

October 26
Tuesday

LOST TREASURE

READ:
Mark 10:17-27

Sell whatever you have
and give to the poor,
and you will have
treasure in heaven.
—Mark 10:21

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 9-11
■ 1 Timothy 6

Don takes walks on the city's railroad tracks and searches under freeway overpasses. He's not looking for lost treasure; he's looking for homeless people. Don met Jake, who lives in a makeshift underground shack and is mentally ill. He stops by to see Jake occasionally, making sure he's warm and has food. He tells Jake about Jesus because he wants him to find "treasure in heaven."

Jesus talked about this treasure with a rich young man who asked Him how to inherit eternal life. Jesus said, "Sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21).

Jesus wasn't teaching that we must give up our wealth to be acceptable to Him. We can never earn eternal life by our works. He was showing this man his spiritual bankruptcy. His heart was set on wealth, not Jesus.

That rich young man and our homeless friend have more in common than we might think. In the eyes of God, both are spiritually bankrupt. We all are, unless we have Jesus.

No good deed can earn eternal life—not helping the homeless or giving away all our money. Jesus wants us to give Him our heart. Then we'll have real treasure—treasure in heaven—and we'll seek to help others. —Anne Cetas

What shall I give Thee, Master?

Giver of gifts divine;

*I will not hold time, talents, or gold—
For everything shall be Thine. —Grimes*

Salvation is given, not earned.

October 27
Wednesday

LETTERS TO GOD

READ:
Psalm 65:1-8

O You who hear prayer,
to You all flesh will
come. —Psalm 65:2

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 12-14
■ 2 Timothy 1

Every year thousands of letters addressed to God find their way to a post office in Jerusalem. One letter, addressed to "God of Israel," requested assistance in getting a job as a bulldozer driver. Another said: "Please help me to be happy, to find a nice job and a good wife—soon." One man asked forgiveness for stealing money from a grocery store when he was a child.

But were those heartfelt requests heard by God? The psalmist said that God is the one who hears prayer (Psalm 65:2). Whether we say our prayers silently, voice them aloud, or write them on paper, they go directly to God. But He does not answer every request as we would wish. Our petitions may be self-serving (James 4:3), or sin may be blocking our fellowship with Him (Psalm 66:18).

More than giving us what we want, the Lord knows our deepest needs, and He wants us to discover the joy of His presence each day. Because of our faith in Christ, praying becomes our means of communion with God, not just a list of things we want from Him.

In His wisdom, God hears all our prayers. In His grace, He offers forgiveness for all our sins. In His love, He gives us eternal and abundant life through His Son. —David McCasland

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray;

This is my heart-cry day unto day.

I long to know Thy will and Thy way;

Teach me to pray, Lord, teach me to pray. —Reitz

**God hears more than our words—
He listens to our heart.**

October 28
Thursday

THE FROG'S "BLACKBOARD"

READ:
Psalm 119:33-40

Turn away my eyes
from looking at
worthless things, and
revive me in Your way.
—Psalm 119:37

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 15-17
■ 2 Timothy 2

endure. In our text the psalmist asked God for help in fixing his attention on what is good and lasting (Psalm 119:37).

The words of the Lord should not depart from our eyes, but must be kept in our heart always (Proverbs 4:21). Then our field of vision will be wiped clean of unnecessary things, and we will see clearly what God wants us to do.

Have you become distracted by sin so that you can no longer discern what is really important? Then take a lesson from the frog's "blackboard" and center your gaze on Christ and His will for your life. —Mart De Haan

*O God, You know my wayward heart,
So prone to choose an earthly part;
From vain affections set me free,
That I may always look to Thee.* —Anon.

**The more attracted we are to Christ,
the less we'll be distracted by the world.**

As a young boy, one of my favorite pastimes was hunting frogs along the banks of a pond near our home. I was unaware of their unique visual powers that enabled them to elude me so easily. Later I learned that the frog's optical field is like a blackboard wiped clean, and that the only images it receives are objects that directly concern him. These little amphibians are never distracted by unimportant things, but are aware only of essentials and whatever may be dangerous to them.

In the Christian life we frequently become preoccupied with the vain things of the world. We allow our lives to become so cluttered with materialistic and insignificant concerns that we lose perspective of the things that

October 29
Friday

WORKING IN THE HARVEST

READ:

Matthew 9:35-10:4

Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

—Matthew 9:38

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 18-19

■ 2 Timothy 3

While D. L. Moody was attending a convention in Indianapolis on mass evangelism, he did more than just talk about it. He asked a friend, who was a gifted musician, to meet him on a street corner at 6 o'clock one evening. The man stood on a box and sang a song. When a crowd gathered, Moody spoke briefly and then invited the people to follow him to the nearby convention hall.

Soon the auditorium was filled with spiritually hungry people, and he preached to them. When the convention attendees began to arrive, Moody stopped preaching and said, "Now we must close, as the brethren of the convention want to discuss the topic, 'How to reach the masses.'"

When Jesus saw the masses, He was "moved with compassion" for them (Matthew 9:36). He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful . . . Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers" (vv.37-38). And He sent them out to preach the good news of His kingdom (10:1).

It is estimated that only 10 percent of the world's population of 6.3 billion are believers in Jesus Christ. And more than 25 percent have never heard of Jesus' love even once.

As His disciples today, let's not just talk about the need—let's pray and go. —Anne Cetas

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Do you want to reach others with the good news of Jesus but lack the confidence to do so? Read How Can I Break The Silence? at www.discoveryseries.org/q0706

The next person you meet may be your mission field.

October 30
Saturday

YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT!

READ:
Galatians 6:1-9

Our transgressions are
multiplied before You,
and our sins testify
against us.

—Isaiah 59:12

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 20-21

■ 2 Timothy 4

in the next. Paul told the Galatians, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Perhaps you have some secret sin that you are hiding. If so, I urge you to confess and forsake it. Or maybe you are gradually being drawn into a situation that you know is wrong and you're tempted to pursue it, thinking you won't get caught. Then I plead with you to go no further. Your picture may not appear on the front page of a newspaper, but the Bible says you won't get away with it! —Dave Egner

The sinful things that we may do

Are often hid from human view,

But judgment day will bring to light

Those things that we have not made right. —D. De Haan

A group of students at Renaissance High School in Detroit decided to cut classes to attend a rock concert in Hart Plaza. They felt they had gotten away with it, but the next day when *The Detroit News* appeared on the newsstand, it carried a color photo of the concert—right there on the front page. And who was in that picture? That's right—the delinquent students of Renaissance High, easily recognizable by anyone.

The Bible teaches that we cannot hide our iniquities. Oh, we may be able to cover them up for a while and even get away with them for an extended period of time. But the day will inevitably come when we must face up to them, either in this world or

**The seeds of wrongdoing may be sown in secret,
but the crop cannot be concealed.**

October 31
Sunday

HOW TO TREAT HALLOWEEN

READ:
Hebrews 11:32-12:3

The memory of the
righteous is blessed,
but the name of the
wicked will rot.
—Proverbs 10:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 22-23
■ Titus 1

witches and ghosts. What then can Christians do? One enterprising pastor had a special gathering in which he asked some of the church people to come dressed in the costumes of Bible heroes and the great saints of church history. In a dramatic way they were calling to mind the sufficiency of God's grace in the lives of His people.

Yes, the example set by that great "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1 encourages our faith. Remembering them on Halloween can remind us of the triumph of trusting the Lord. —Herb Vander Lugt

*Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword—
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!* —Faber

The word *Halloween* comes from All Hallows' Eve, which was the evening before a religious holiday in Medieval England that became known as All Saints' Day. It was a time set aside by the church to commemorate its saints.

Today's celebration of Halloween, however, is more closely related to pagan customs that originated in ancient Europe. The Druids believed that the spirits of the dead returned to their former haunts during the night of October 31, so they lit torches and set out food for these unwelcome visitors. They did this out of fear, thinking they would be harmed if they didn't.

The Bible warns against all dabbling in the occult and preoccupation with

**The greatest gift anyone can give us
is a godly example.**

November 1
Monday

THE PINE LOOPER

READ:
Jeremiah 17:1-10

He shall be like a tree
planted by the waters,
which spreads out its
roots by the river.
—Jeremiah 17:8

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 24-26
■ Titus 2

The dry-tree condition behind this New Jersey fire has a parallel in the history of Israel. Jeremiah said that his countrymen had become like dry shrubs in a desert rather than green trees by a river (17:6-8). Even more alarming, he said they had aroused the fire of God's anger (v.4) by trusting in man and departing from the Lord (v.5). For Christians today, it's life's fiery trials that threaten to scorch our souls if we're trusting in our own strength.

Father, forgive us for making ourselves dry and leafless. Without Your mercy, we would be consumed when the heat comes. Teach us to root ourselves in the river of Your sufficiency. —Mart De Haan

*The person who relies upon
The Lord's sufficiency
Is like a tree that's planted by
Deep waters flowing free. —Sper*

**The fires of life will not destroy you
if you're watered by the River of Life.**

In the summer of 1992, a fire blackened 4,500 acres of forest about 35 miles north of Atlantic City. One homeowner saw a fireball with 60-foot flames come roaring up across the street from his house, before veering away. The Associated Press quoted him as saying, "I've worked 25 years of my life here. The thought of having it gone in 10 minutes makes you want to stay for the last possible minute."

The fire was difficult to contain because of dry conditions. The forest was dry despite rainfall, partly because of an insect called the pine looper, which defoliates trees.

The dry-tree condition behind this New Jersey fire has a parallel in the history of Israel. Jeremiah said that his

November 2
Tuesday

WIN OR LOSE, DO GOOD

READ:

Titus 3:1-8

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. —Titus 3:1

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 27-29

■ Titus 3

people living and ruling there, but Paul warned Christians not to do it.

In fact, seven times in his short letter to Titus, Paul mentioned the importance of doing good: loving what is good (1:8), teaching what is good (2:3), doing what is good (2:7,14; 3:1-2,8,14).

Paul's letter is a timely reminder that as Christians we are to do what is good for people, regardless of whether we approve of their values and agree with their policies. It may not be easy, but it's the right thing to do. —Julie Link

*From the example of Jesus,
Who went about doing good,
We are to honor our Savior
By helping wherever He would. —Hess*

When the results of today's presidential election are known, US citizens will either be glad or sad, depending on their political persuasion. Those who voted for the winner are likely to accept the authority of the government he establishes. Most others will submit, though grudgingly.

Christians are to go beyond mere submission to governing authorities and follow the guidelines given in the Bible. In writing to Titus, Paul said we should also be peaceable and considerate, and we should do good without slandering anyone (3:1-2).

Titus was working among believers in Crete, a place notorious for its unruly inhabitants. There were good reasons to say bad things about the

**Christians can be constructive
if they refuse to be destructive.**

November 3
Wednesday

ANOTHER CHANCE

READ:
Luke 22:24-34

Do you love Me? . . .
Tend My sheep.
—John 21:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

- Jeremiah 30-31
- Philemon

Pentecost, however, God chose Peter to deliver the most vital sermon in church history. "It would seem," Duncan said, "that some Christians have a message of forgiveness for the unbeliever, but no message of forgiveness for the believer. I'm glad that God does!" Because of that forgiveness, a new day of service dawned for Peter.

Indeed, if you are a repentant believer like Peter, you too can trust the Lord to give you another chance. Confess your sin and experience His forgiveness, healing, and restoration (1 John 1:9). —Joanie Yoder

*When we confess our sins to God,
We're washed as white as snow;
Then He will send us out again—
His love and grace to show. —Sper*

Jesus promised Peter something every repentant believer craves—another chance (Luke 22:31-34). After telling him Satan would sift him as wheat, Jesus reassured Peter that He had prayed that his faith would not fail. Although Peter had insisted he would never forsake Him, Jesus said he would deny Him three times before dawn. In expectation of Peter's restoration, Jesus recommissioned him for future ministry: "When you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (v.32).

Preacher George Duncan said, "I don't think many church-vacancy committees would have considered Peter a suitable candidate for a church!" Duncan pointed out that at

**God's forgiveness always comes
with another chance.**

November 4
Thursday

"RETRONYMS"

READ:
John 3:1-17

Do not marvel that I
said to you, "You must
be born again."
—John 3:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 32-33
■ Hebrews 1

What do regular coffee, acoustic guitars, and black-and-white television have in common? All are what journalist Frank Mankiewicz calls "retronyms"—words or phrases created because a familiar word needs to be distinguished from a term that refers to a new development or invention.

Once, all coffee was regular, all guitars were acoustic, and all TVs were black and white. Not so today, thus the need for a growing list of retronyms, including *decaf mocha java*, *electric guitar*, and *high-def television*.

It could be said that Jesus turned the phrase *physical birth* into a retronym when He told an inquiring man named Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus was a religious person who didn't grasp the idea of second birth. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked Jesus. "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (v.4). Jesus further explained the difference between being born of the flesh and being born of the Spirit, then concluded, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (v.7).

Our Christian life begins when we invite Jesus to live within us. It's a miracle! We're born again. —David McCasland

*Rejoice, O soul, the debt is paid,
For all our sins on Christ were laid;
We've been redeemed, we're justified—
And all because the Savior died.* —D. De Haan

**Natural life came by God's breath;
eternal life comes by Christ's death.**

November 5
Friday

MARCHING OFF THE MAP

READ:
Genesis 12:1-4

Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. —Genesis 12:1

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 34-36
■ Hebrews 2

That happened to Sarah and Abraham. God gave them marching orders without a map. They needed only enough faith to begin the journey, and they headed out to unknown territories and unimagined adventures. God never told them He would turn them "every which way but loose" before fulfilling His promise of a son who would become a great nation.

Make your plans. But write them on paper, not in concrete. God and life have a way of intruding and leading you on a journey that you might not have anticipated in your wildest dreams. —Haddon Robinson

FOR FURTHER STUDY

*Need help finding God's will for your life? Read
How Can I Know What God Wants Me To Do?
at www.discoveryseries.org/q0704*

Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans. Our lives are subject to detours and corrections that we never expected or imagined.

Abraham and Sarah could testify to that. They were planning for retirement when life "happened" to them. God adjusted their agenda. He told Abraham, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). So this old couple packed up the tent and headed out to only God knew where.

When Alexander the Great had completed his conquest of Persia, he headed east. Author Halford Luccock said the general "marched off his maps."

**A man's heart plans his way,
but the LORD directs his steps. —Proverbs 16:9**

November 6
Saturday

THE GOOD ATHEIST

READ:
Luke 10:25-37

You shall love your
neighbor as yourself.
—Romans 13:9

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

- Jeremiah 37-39
- Hebrews 3

When a man learned that an elderly woman could no longer buy her medicine and pay her rent, he came to her rescue. He took her into his home and treated her as if she were his mother. He gave her a bedroom, prepared the food for her meals, bought her medicine, and transported her whenever she needed medical attention. He continued to care for her when she could no longer do much for herself. I was amazed when I learned that this good man was a zealous atheist!

The Jews were shocked by Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, because He put him in a positive light. They despised the Samaritans the way I tend to look down on atheists.

A lawyer had tested Jesus by asking how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what the law said. The man answered that he must love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbor as himself (Luke 10:25-27). He asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (v.29). In Jesus' story, the Samaritan was the neighbor who showed kindness to the wounded man.

Jesus wanted this parable to challenge His listeners. The stories of the Good Samaritan and the good atheist remind us of this high standard of God's Word: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Romans 13:9). —Herb Vander Lugt

*To love my neighbor as myself
Is not an easy task,
But God will show His love through me
If only I will ask. —Sper*

Needy people need our helping hand.

November 7
Sunday

THE WAR IS OVER!

READ:
Hebrews 4

[Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. —Ephesians 2:17

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 40–42
■ Hebrews 4

who have placed their trust in Christ live on almost the same level. Either out of ignorance or unwillingness, they fail to claim the promises of God's Word. They do not experience the joy and assurance that should accompany salvation. They do not draw from their relationship with God the comfort and peace He intends for His children. They are the objects of His love, care, and provision but live as if they were orphans.

Have you been living apart from the comfort, love, and care of your heavenly Father? Come on home. The war is over! —Richard De Haan

We fail, O Lord, to realize

The fullness of what You have done,

So help us trust Your saving work

And claim the triumph You have won. —D. De Haan

**Christ's victory over death
means peace for His saints.**

The bitter conflict had finally ended between the North and the South. The soldiers of the US Civil War were free to return to their families. But a number of them remained hidden in the woods, living on berries. They either didn't hear or didn't believe that the war was over, so they continued enduring miserable conditions when they could have been back home.

It's something like that in the spiritual realm too. Christ made peace between God and man by dying in our place. He paid sin's penalty on the cross. Anyone who accepts His sacrifice will be forgiven by a holy God.

Sadly, many people refuse to believe the gospel and continue to live as spiritual fugitives. Sometimes even those

November 8
Monday

THE LITTLE EVANGELIST

READ:

Mark 12:28-34

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. —Mark 12:30

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Jeremiah 43-45

■ Hebrews 5

you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength'" (vv.29-30).

Jesus was referring to Old Testament times, when God had told the Israelites to place Him as the one and only God in their lives and nation. The pagan nations around them had many gods they loved and worshiped, but God's people were to be different.

Loving God is to be our top priority too. So, Michael wants to know, "Do you love God?" —Anne Cetas

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior?

What evidence is there in your life that you love God?

How are you showing God's love to others?

**If you truly love the Lord,
you'll want others to love Him too.**

My 6-year-old neighbor Michael and I were talking in my front yard when two new neighbor kids stopped by. After I asked them their names, Michael's first question to them was: "Do you love God?" Sugar, a 5-year-old boy, quickly responded, "No!" Michael gave him a look of disapproval and concern. When 4-year-old Nana noticed he wasn't pleased with that answer, she said, "Yes!"

Michael's "witnessing strategy" may not be the most effective, but he does have an important question for the people he meets (and I've heard him ask it of several others as well).

Jesus was asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28).

He answered, "The LORD is one. 'And

November 9
Tuesday

HOPE FOR WORRIERS

READ:
Psalm 23

The LORD is my
shepherd; I shall not
want. —Psalm 23:1

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 46–47
■ Hebrews 6

The Purpose-Driven Life, wrote: “When you think about a problem over and over in your mind, that’s called worry. When you think about God’s Word over and over in your mind, that’s meditation. If you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate!”

The more we meditate on God’s Word, the less we need to worry. In Psalm 23, David meditated on his great Shepherd instead of worrying. Later, God chose him to be the shepherd of His people (Psalm 78:70-72). God uses those who can honestly say, “The Lord is my shepherd.” —Joanie Yoder

*When fear and worry test your faith
And anxious thoughts assail,
Remember God is in control
And He will never fail. —Sper*

**The more we think about God’s Word,
the less we’ll think about our worries.**

Everyone worries occasionally, but I was once a “professional worrier.” My daily preoccupation was mulling over my worries, one by one.

Then one day I had to face an uncomfortable medical test, and I was frantic with fear. Finally I decided that during the test I would focus on the first five words of Psalm 23, “The LORD is my shepherd.” This exercise in meditation not only calmed me, but I gained several fresh insights. Later, as I slowly meditated through the entire psalm, the Lord gave me more insights. Eventually I was able to share at conferences what the Lord had taught me.

If you’re a worrier, there’s hope for you too! Rick Warren, author of *The*

November 10
Wednesday

WALKING OUR FAITH

READ:
Romans 2:17-24

Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? —James 2:22

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 48-49
■ Hebrews 7

Often we Christians are urged not just to "talk the talk" but to "walk the talk." The same advice may be expressed in these words: Don't let your behavior contradict your professed belief. At other times we are admonished to be sure that life and lip agree. If our conduct doesn't harmonize with our confession of faith, however, that discrepancy nullifies the testimony of the gospel which we proclaim.

As far as we can know, Mahatma Gandhi never became a Christian, but he made a statement that we who follow Jesus would do well to ponder. When asked to put his message into one short sentence, he replied, "My life is my message."

Certainly we should explain the gospel message as clearly as possible. Yet the clearest explanation isn't going to win hearts for our Lord unless His love is embodied in our lives. To quote the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." And holding himself up as a pattern, he wrote in Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

Pray, then, that like Paul we may live out our saving faith before the watching world. —Vernon Grounds

*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me—
All His wonderful passion and purity!
O Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. —Orsborn*

**The world is watching us—
do they see Jesus?**

November 11
Thursday

THE AGONY OF THE CROSS

READ:
Isaiah 53

[Jesus] humbled
Himself and became
obedient to the point
of death, even the
death of the cross.
—Philippians 2:8

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 50
■ Hebrews 8

was placed on a wooden cross. Nails . . . were driven into the hands and feet of the victim, and then the cross was lifted and jarred into the ground, tearing the flesh of the crucified and racking his body with excruciating pain. Historians remind us that even the soldiers could not get used to the horrible sight, and often took strong drink to numb their senses."

With a fresh awareness of our Savior's physical agony, let's thank Him anew for His sacrifice at Calvary. He loved us so much that He was willing to die for us—even the painful death of the cross. —Richard De Haan

Was it for crimes that I have done

He groaned upon the tree?

Amazing pity! Grace unknown!

And love beyond degree! —Watts

As Christians, we understand the spiritual significance of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, but it's easy to forget about the tremendous agony He endured there. The worst aspect was separation from the Father, but the physical suffering was also horrible beyond comprehension.

In his book *Dare To Believe*, Dan Baumann shares some thoughts that can deepen our gratitude for what the Savior did for us. He wrote, "We have perhaps unwisely and sometimes unconsciously glamorized the cross. Jewelry and steeples alike are often ornamental and attractive but carry nothing of the real story of crucifixion. It was the most painful method of public death in the first century. The victim

**We can never sacrifice enough
for the One who sacrificed His all for us.**

November 12
Friday

GLOOM INDEX

READ:
Acts 16:16-31

At midnight Paul and
Silas were praying and
singing hymns to God.
—Acts 16:25

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Jeremiah 51-52
■ Hebrews 9

Gray skies, blue mood. It's common enough to produce what some have called the "gloom index." That's a way of describing the amount of cloudy weather a region can expect during a winter season.

A related idea is called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The theory is that weather-sensitive people experience a certain amount of cloud-induced melancholy.

Other factors might be figured into a gloom index. Think about what Paul and Silas endured (Acts 16). Any one of their troubles was enough to ruin the sunniest day. Imagine the irritations of dealing with greedy profiteers who had turned a demon-possessed girl into a sideshow (vv.16-17). Think

about the pain of confronting an angry mob and furious judges (v.22), of receiving a whipping and imprisonment (v.23), and of having your feet locked in stocks (v.24).

But Paul and Silas rose above it (v.25). How did they do that? They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they had a sense of mission. They were motivated by a desire to obey God and spread the message of Christ.

Like them, we can rise above the mood swings prompted by our circumstances. By being strong in the Spirit, we can overcome the gloom index. —Mart De Haan

*God often sends me joy through pain,
Through bitter loss, divinest gain;
Yet through it all—dark days or bright—
I know my Father leads aright. —Conklin*

God's Son can brighten our darkest days.

November 13
Saturday

AIN'T IT AWFUL!

READ:

Lamentations 3:25-42

Let us search out and
examine our ways, and
turn back to the LORD.
—Lamentations 3:40

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

- Lamentations 1-2
- Hebrews 10:1-18

suffered because of their disobedience, but he clung to his faith in God's goodness. Even after witnessing the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of his people, Jeremiah wrote: "The LORD will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD" (Lamentations 3:31-32,40).

Disobedience to God can cause great pain, but the doorway out of discouragement leads to the Lord, who "is good to those who wait for Him" (v.25). —David McCasland

*Turn not aside, discouraged one,
Stir up your gift, pursue your goal;
In God's own time you'll see Him work,
He'll give you hope and lift your soul.* —D. De Haan

A friend told me about a man who shouted the same three words each day from his street-corner newsstand. "Ain't it awful!" he would say to passersby while extending a newspaper. People bought a paper because they just had to know what terrible thing had occurred.

Tragedy and dire predictions always make the front page, but if we become preoccupied with bad news, we will succumb to what my friend calls "awfulizing"—a pervasive pessimism that clouds every situation with gloom.

If anyone had a good reason for being despondent, it was the prophet Jeremiah. For 40 years, he declared God's judgment on the rebellious and unrepentant nation of Judah. Jeremiah

**Awful circumstances cannot alter
the goodness of God.**

November 14
Sunday

MORE THAN SOCIALIZING

READ:

Hebrews 10:19-25

Be kindly affectionate
to one another with
brotherly love.
—Romans 12:10

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Lamentations 3-5
■ Hebrews 10:19-39

Church can be a great place to get caught up on the latest football games, golf scores, family news, health concerns, or just to visit with friends. A cup of coffee together, a warm handshake, a friendly pat on the back are all part of the social interaction we need as human beings.

All of this is good, but New Testament fellowship goes much deeper than merely socializing when we get together at church. It takes place when we consider how we can lift up, build up, and brighten up our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Bible clearly says that we are to “serve one another” (Galatians 5:13), forgive as we are forgiven (Ephesians 4:32), and “bear one another’s bur-

dens” (Galatians 6:2). From the first century, believers have gathered in Jesus’ name to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” and to exhort one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Christian fellowship takes place when we offer encouragement to our friends, pray for them, and confess our sins and weaknesses to one another. These are the elements that make fellowship genuine.

What about your church? Are you merely socializing? Or are you practicing true Christian fellowship? —Dave Egner

*We Christians have a kinship with
All others who believe,
And from that bond of faith and love
A mutual strength receive. —Hess*

**Christian fellowship builds us up
and binds us together.**

November 15
Monday

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

READ:
Acts 26:6-23

King Agrippa, I was
not disobedient to
the heavenly vision.
—Acts 26:19

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 1-2
■ Hebrews 11:1-19

that Jesus wanted to live in him too.

Lane spent the next 6 months soul-searching and reading the New Testament. "I came to the end of my rope and cried out to God," he said. "I cried out all the bitterness and anger that was within me. And I felt this tremendous infusion of joy, and God became at that moment a living reality in my life—a reality that has never left me."

We tell others our logic for believing in Jesus, which is based on God's Word. But it's also important to tell them what He has done for us personally. —Herb Vander Lugt

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Trying to reach out to an angry person in your life?
Read How Can I Share My Faith Without An
Argument? at www.discoveryseries.org/q0709

**When telling others what Jesus can do for them,
tell them what He has done for you.**

In a debate at Boston College, Christian scholar William Craig Lane convincingly set forth the historical arguments for believing in Jesus' resurrection, much as the apostle Paul did in Acts 26. Then Lane told the story of his conversion.

As a child he never went to church, but in his teens he began to be plagued by questions about death and the meaning of life. He started going to church, but the sermons didn't answer his questions. What he saw in his church-going classmates led him to conclude that most Christians were phonies. He became an angry loner. One day a girl who always seemed to be happy told him that her joy came from having Jesus in her life, and she assured him

November 16
Tuesday

As Is

READ:
2 Corinthians 5:14-21

If anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation;
old things have passed
away; behold, all things
have become new.
—2 Corinthians 5:17

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 3-4
■ Hebrews 11:20-40

so many times that she feels she has little value anymore. And after making her own mistakes and living with her own bad choices, she's sure she will be left on life's junk heap forever.

But then someone tells her about Jesus. Someone mentions that Jesus specializes in castoffs, that He is waiting to transform anyone who trusts Him—even her. Someone tells her that Jesus will take her “as is.” She believes. She trusts. And Jesus begins to restore another lost person to the abundant life He has promised. —Dave Branon

The new life in Christ has begun—

The past with its darkness is gone;

Look closer to see what the Savior has done,

For change is beginning to dawn. —Hess

The beat-up old car sits on the used-car lot, rusty and forsaken. Years of abuse and hard driving have taken their toll on the formerly shiny automobile.

A man walks onto the lot and is attracted to this rust bucket. He plunks down cash and the salesperson hands over the keys while saying, “I’m selling you this car ‘as is.’” The new owner just smiles; he knows his cars, and he’s about to restore this castoff to its former beauty.

Across town, a troubled woman sits in forlorn sadness, contemplating where she went wrong. Years of abuse and hard living have taken their toll on what was once a vibrant young girl. She’s been mistreated by others

**Salvation is not turning over a new leaf,
but receiving a new life.**

November 17
Wednesday

PAIN IS NOT POINTLESS

READ:

Isaiah 28:23-29

This also comes from the LORD of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.

—Isaiah 28:29

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ezekiel 5-7

■ Hebrews 12

have whined, "Who needs this painful plowing?" But the pain is not pointless. Isaiah said that the farmer is taught by God to work in measured and well-timed ways, handling delicate crops with care and others more vigorously, but always with a sure harvest in view.

Our reassurance during tough times is that the farmer's God is our God, "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance" (v.29). His dealings with us are always thoughtful and purposeful, producing in us "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11). —Joanie Yoder

God has a purpose in our heartaches—

The Savior always knows what's best;

We learn so many precious lessons

In every sorrow, trial, and test. —Jarvis

During times of hardship, I often feel like whining, "Who needs this pain? I certainly don't!" But Isaiah 28 and my own experience tell me this is a shortsighted reaction. Not that we need hardship just for its own sake, but we do need to be changed and to mature. In God's hand, hardship can be an effective tool to bring about our much-needed growth.

In verses 23-28, we read the prophet's "poetic parable," written to help the people of Israel understand how God works and what He intended to accomplish in their lives through tough times. A farmer is portrayed skillfully plowing the ground, planting his crops, and threshing the harvest. If the soil could talk, it might

**When you trust in God,
pain is an opportunity for progress.**

November 18
Thursday

GOD'S ASTONISHING PROMISE

READ:
Hebrews 13:5-6

I will never leave you
nor forsake you.
—Hebrews 13:5

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 8-10
■ Hebrews 13

The writer to the Hebrews quotes God as saying to His people, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). How does that strike you? Is it just some pleasant piety that evokes a wide yawn?

This isn't like saying we have coffee with the President or a Supreme Court justice. Knowing people like that would say something significant about us. But to claim that God is with us every moment of every day, as close as our skin, in every turn of life, tear-stained or drenched in smiles—some would say that borders on insanity.

Yet throughout history men and women have staked their lives on that truth. Abraham, Moses, Rahab, Joshua, David, Esther, just to name a few. The promise was true for them, but how can we know it's true for us?

It is true for us because of Jesus. By His coming, He says, "I want to be with you; I gave Myself to you; I gave Myself for you. Do you really think I would ever forsake you?"

How do you respond to this astonishing promise? Say it's too good to be true. Say it sounds unbelievable. But don't ignore it. In your hurts, your fears, your struggles, your temptations, there is no more wonderful promise than this: "I will never leave you nor forsake you." —Haddon Robinson

*Though all around is darkness,
Earthly joys have flown;
My Savior whispers His promise
Never to leave me alone. —Anon.*

No matter where you go, God goes with you.

November 19
Friday

JOYFUL TRIALS

READ:
James 1:1-12

Count it all joy when
you fall into various
trials. —James 1:2

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 11-13
■ James 1

The Bible tells us to respond to difficult circumstances in a way that is directly opposed to our natural tendency. One of the most challenging of those commands is this: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

Other translations speak of viewing our difficulties with pure joy, considering ourselves happy—not resisting trials and temptations as intruders but welcoming them as friends. I don't know about you, but that's not the first thing that pops into my mind.

This outlook would seem absurd and unattainable if not for the reason behind it: "knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (v.3). An attitude of joy is not based on what

we feel but on what we know of God and His work in our lives. Therefore, a painful process that yields a desired goal can be welcomed as a friend.

It's not the testing of our strength but the trying of our faith in Almighty God that develops our endurance. Through it all, the Lord promises wisdom for today (v.5) and a crown of life for those who persevere (v.12).

My natural response to difficult circumstances is "Oh, no!" The Lord wants me to see what He can accomplish through them and say, "Oh, yes!" —David McCasland

*The deeper meaning of my trials
O Lord, You've kept from me;
But some small part of Your great plan
I pray, Lord, help me see. —D. De Haan*

**Joy in trials comes from knowing
that the outcome will be good.**

November 20
Saturday

LET THE WHOLE WORLD HEAR

READ:
Acts 1:1-8

Go into all the world
and preach the gospel
to every creature.
—Mark 16:15

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 14-15
■ James 2

Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), the world-famous violinist, earned a fortune with his concerts and compositions, but he generously gave most of it away. So, when he discovered an exquisite violin on one of his trips, he lacked the money to buy it.

Later, having raised enough money to meet the asking price, he returned to the seller, hoping to purchase that beautiful instrument. But to his great dismay it had been sold to a collector. Kreisler made his way to the new owner's home and offered to buy the violin. The collector said it had become his prized possession and he would not sell it.

Disappointed, Kreisler was about to leave when he had an idea. "Could I play the instrument once more before it is consigned to silence?" he asked. Permission was granted, and the great virtuoso filled the room with such heart-moving music that the collector's emotions were deeply stirred. "I have no right to keep that to myself," he exclaimed. "It's yours, Mr. Kreisler. Take it into the world, and let people hear it."

To sinners saved by grace, the gospel is like the rapturous harmonies of heaven. We have no right to keep it to ourselves. Jesus tells us to take it into our world and let people hear it. —Vernon Grounds

*I'll tell the world how Jesus saved me
And how He gave me a life brand new;
And I know that if you trust Him
That all He gave me He'll give to you. —Fox*

**Someone told you about Jesus.
Have you told someone lately?**

November 21
Sunday

A UNIQUE SACRIFICE

READ:
Hebrews 10:1-18

This Man, after He had
offered one sacrifice
for sins forever, sat
down at the right hand
of God.
—Hebrews 10:12

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 16-17
■ James 3

His offer of salvation receive complete forgiveness and eternal life (John 3:16).

In Hebrews 10, the Bible speaks about the animal offerings of the Old Testament and compares them to the death of Jesus. Verse 4 states, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Those sacrifices pointed to the need for Christ's death.

The substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ provides full salvation to all who have placed their trust in Him. Hallelujah, what a Savior! —Herb Vander Lugt

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood,
Hallelujah! What a Savior!* —Bliss

What do you think of when you hear the word *sacrifice*? We may use the term when we see parents who follow a strict budget and drive an old car so they can send their children to college. It certainly is a good word to describe the selfless action of a soldier who throws himself on a live grenade to take the full brunt of the explosion and save the lives of his companions.

Such noble sacrifices, however, pale when compared to what our Savior did for us on the cross. His sacrifice was unique. Jesus suffered and died "for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Because of His death and resurrection, all who accept

**Believing Christ died—that's history;
believing He died for me—that's salvation!**

November 22
Monday

CLOSET CHRISTIANS

READ:

Matthew 5:13-16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
—Matthew 5:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ezekiel 18-19

■ James 4

t said, "I can't thank you enough. I would have had to make up the difference. Obviously, you are an honest man." He replied, "The reason I am honest is that I'm a committed follower of Jesus Christ. Giving you back the money is something He would want me to do."

Christians should lead exemplary lives. But it's important that we reveal the Source of strength and life who enables us to be different. As Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). —Haddon Robinson

*Like a brightly shining light
In the darkness of the night,
We will stand for truth and right—
Let the whole world know! —Peterson*

**It's the life behind the words
that makes your testimony effective.**

A businessman gave his heart to Jesus as a result of a Billy Graham evangelistic event. When he told his co-workers, his Christian business partner was elated. But the new believer hadn't known about his faith, and said, "You know, you're one reason I resisted becoming a Christian for several years. I figured that if someone like you could live a good life and not be a Christian, there was no need for me to become one."

A friend of mine and I were doing business in a local bank. He needed to change a \$100 bill. By mistake the teller counted out six \$20 bills. When my friend discovered the error, he walked back into the bank and quietly told her what had happened. The teller

November 23
Tuesday

"JUST AS I AM"

READ:

John 6:35-40

All that the Father
gives Me will come
to Me, and the one
who comes to Me I will
by no means cast out.
—John 6:37

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ezekiel 20-21

■ James 5

she included with it John 6:37.

Jesus always accepts people as they are. In John 6, the people had come from miles around to hear Jesus. When the crowd became hungry, He miraculously fed them with a boy's unselfish gift of five loaves and two fish. Then the Lord offered Himself as "the bread of life," promising that He would not turn away anyone who came to Him.

It's still true today. No one who comes to Jesus will be turned away. Come to Him with all your sin. He'll accept you just as you are. —Dave Egner

*Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!* —Elliott

No one is too good or too bad to be saved.

Charlotte Elliott learned an important lesson about Jesus one sleepless night in 1834. She was an invalid, so when her family held a bazaar in Brighton, England, to raise money to build a school, she could only watch from afar.

That night she was overwhelmed by her helplessness and could not sleep. But her sadness turned to joy when she realized that God accepted her just as she was.

Her experience inspired these well-loved words: "Just as I am, without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!" When she published the poem in *The Invalid's Hymn Book*,

November 24
Wednesday

GIVE THANKS AND REMEMBER

READ:

Hebrews 13:1-16

Do not forget to do
good and to share,
for with such sacrifices
God is well pleased.
—Hebrews 13:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 22-23
■ 1 Peter 1

One of today's most popular syndicated newspaper columns is "Dear Abby." Started in 1956 by Abigail Van Buren, the advice column is written today by her daughter Jeanne Phillips. In a recent edition, she included this Thanksgiving Prayer written many years before by her mother:

*O Heavenly Father:
We thank Thee for food
and remember the hungry.
We thank Thee for health
and remember the sick.
We thank Thee for friends
and remember the friendless.
We thank Thee for freedom
and remember the enslaved.
May these remembrances
stir us to service.
That Thy gifts to us may be used
for others. Amen.*

The words of this prayer echo the clear teaching of Scripture. Our thanksgiving to God should always be accompanied by thinking of those in need. "Therefore," said the writer to the Hebrews, "by [Jesus] let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

But there is more to it than thankfulness. We are to put actions behind our gratitude. "Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (v.16).

Be thankful for God's many blessings, but be sure to remember those who have less. —David McCasland

Serving others is a way of thanking God.

November 25
Thursday

BE FILLED WITH THANKFULNESS

READ:
Romans 1:18-22

Let us continually offer
the sacrifice of praise
to God, that is, the
fruit of our lips, giving
thanks to His name.
—Hebrews 13:15

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 24-26
■ 1 Peter 2

Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time for expressing their thankfulness. In the US, Thanksgiving Day originated with the pilgrims. In the midst of extreme hardship, loss of loved ones, and meager supplies, they still believed they were blessed. They chose to celebrate God's blessings by sharing a meal with Native Americans who had helped them survive.

We know we've lost the spirit of that original celebration when we catch ourselves complaining that our Thanksgiving Day has been "spoiled" by bad weather, disappointing food, or a bad cold. It's we who are spoiled—spoiled by the very blessings that should make every day a day

of thanksgiving, whatever our circumstances.

Billy Graham wrote, "Ingratitude is a sin, just as surely as is lying or stealing or immorality or any other sin condemned by the Bible." He then quoted Romans 1:21, one of the Bible's indictments against rebellious humanity. Then Dr. Graham added, "Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness."

Which condition describes you? —Joanie Yoder

A grumbling mood of discontent

Gives way to thankfulness

When we consider all God's gifts

And all that we possess. —Sper

Gratitude is a God-honoring attitude.

November 26
Friday

WATCH YOUR EYES

READ:
Matthew 6:19-23

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

—Matthew 6:22

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 27-29
■ 1 Peter 3

The ability to discern between good and evil is determined by the things on which we focus our spiritual eyes. If we set our eyes on money, for example, we may have the good life for a while, but our judgment will become clouded. We'll make choices that defy our own values—choices that may devastate our families and destroy us in the end.

The Bible warns, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts" (1 Timothy 6:9). If we love money we'll go to any extreme to get it. And then, "How great is that darkness" (Matthew 6:23).

In C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Edmund's lust for sweets leads

him to betray his beloved brother and sisters. Eustace's desire for the dragon's gold eventually turns him into a dragon. Greed overcomes Prince Caspian on Deathwater Island as he dreams of the power its magic water will bring him.

Food, money, power—wherever we focus our spiritual eyes determines what we desire, and whether our lives are filled with light or filled with darkness. Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22).

Be careful where your eyes lead your desires. —David Roper

*No greater peace can flood our soul
Than when we choose a heavenly goal,
But when we covet worldly gain*

We choose a path that brings us pain. —D. De Haan

**Cure for covetousness: Think of something to give
instead of something to get.**

November 27
Saturday

POINTING FINGERS

READ:
Psalm 14

There is none who does
good, no, not one.
—Psalm 14:3

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 30–32
■ 1 Peter 4

An employee in the bill-collection department of a large store gave me an insight into human nature. He told me that he repeatedly gets the following response from customers who are delinquent in paying their bills: "I know you must have others who owe a lot more than I do. Get off my back, will you!"

The employee then told me, "They miss the point entirely. Sure, there are a lot of others who owe more. But somehow I have to tell them in a nice way, 'Look, what somebody else owes isn't the issue. Our records say that *your* account is overdue!'"

The tendency of sinful man has always been to shift attention from himself by pointing the finger at others.

Religious people excuse their inconsistencies by referring to the "pagans" around them. And the "pagans" try to sidestep the issue by talking about the hypocrisies of the religious. But God is not fooled by finger-pointers.

When someone else appears to be a greater sinner than we are, it's just an illusion. The sooner we realize that no one owes more to God than we do, the more likely we are to receive His free forgiveness. He extends His pardon only to those who humbly acknowledge that they are hopelessly in debt. —Mart De Haan

*My sin, O Lord, defies Your Word,
It scorns Your holy name;
I will not make excuse for wrong—
Christ's blood is what I claim.* —D. De Haan

One sin rationalized becomes two.

November 28
Sunday

WORTHY OF WORSHIP

READ:
Psalm 99

Exalt the LORD our
God, and worship at
His footstool—He is
holy. —Psalm 99:5

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 33–34
■ 1 Peter 5

As Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep in the desert, his attention was drawn to a strange sight. A bush was burning without being consumed. When Moses turned to look more closely, God said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

Joshua had a similar experience when he approached the captain of the host of the Lord. As Joshua drew nearer, he was given this command: "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy" (Joshua 5:15).

The experiences of Moses and Joshua teach us that a holy God demands our reverence and respect.

True, we are encouraged to "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). We can enter the presence of God with confidence because Jesus has opened the way for us through His death on the cross. But never are we to approach God with disrespect. Never are we to profane His name.

Our heavenly Father is not "the man upstairs." He is God, the One who is high and lifted up. And because of His majesty and holiness, we are to exalt and worship Him. As the one true God, He is worthy of our adoration. Let's give Him our highest praise. —Richard De Haan

*You alone are worthy, Lord,
To be worshiped and adored;
We to You our tribute bring
As our hearts rejoice and sing. —Hess*

**True worship acknowledges
the true worthship of God.**

November 29
Monday

HOW TO CLEAN ANYTHING

READ:

1 John 1:5-10

The blood of Jesus
Christ His Son cleanses
us from all sin.
—1 John 1:7

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:

■ Ezekiel 35–36

■ 2 Peter 1

What you will not find in this little book is how to deal with the most serious stain of all—the stain made on your life by sin. Deep, ugly stains made by hostile words and shame-filled actions. Tears won't touch them. Zeal can't erase them. At times we are convinced that we have gotten on with our lives and the sins are gone, but in an unguarded moment we notice the stain seeping through.

The Bible tells us just what we need: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). That's the only remedy that works. —Haddon Robinson

Jesus paid it all,

All to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain—

He washed it white as snow. —Hall

Consumer Reports published a booklet with the intriguing title *How To Clean Practically Anything*. It offers advice on what solvent to use to remove a wide assortment of stains. Living as I do with drips and drops, that is my kind of book.

Did you know that glycerin will remove stains made by a ball-point pen? Boiling water can remove berry stains. Parents of small children should keep a gallon of vinegar handy to get rid of crayon marks. Bleach works well for mildew. Lemon juice performs minor miracles on rust stains.

I haven't tried them all, but I assume that scientists have put these common cleansing agents to the test.

**We may whitewash sin,
but only Jesus' blood can truly wash it white.**

November 30
Tuesday

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

READ:
Colossians 3:12-17

Let the word of Christ
dwell in you richly
in all wisdom.
—Colossians 3:16

THE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR:
■ Ezekiel 37-39
■ 2 Peter 2

During a Sunday morning worship service, I was intrigued to see the interpreter for the deaf continue to sign during an instrumental piano offertory. After the service I asked her what she was saying during that time when no words were being spoken or sung. She said that she had signed the words to the hymn being played, and also answered questions her "audience" asked about the pianist, her style, and her training.

"Instrumental music can be a blank place in worship for the deaf," she told me. Instead of taking a break or enjoying it alone, she thought of those who couldn't hear and kept the worship service unbroken for them.

That experience broadened my understanding of Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." As we allow God's Word to fill our hearts and have free rein in our lives, we can share it with others through words of instruction, encouragement, and praise to the Lord. Imagine the impact it could have in our homes, in private conversations, and in worship together.

As you encourage others by sharing God's Word from your heart, it will be music to their ears. —David McCasland

*Sing praise to God who reigns above,
The God of all creation,
The God of power, the God of love,
The God of our salvation. —Schütz*

**Let God's Word fill your heart
and guide your words.**

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September • October • November 2004

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Making It Personal

First Step: Admit our lost condition. We all come into this world physically alive but spiritually dead. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Jesus Christ is the One who said that He didn't come into this world to help good people, but "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Second Step: Learn what God has done for us. The good news of Jesus Christ is that God Himself loved us enough to send His own Son into this world to rescue us from our sin (John 1:1-4; 3:16). To solve the problems of our lost relationship with His Father, Jesus died in our place, offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice to pay the price of sin. Because He was not only man but God as well (John 1:1-14), His death was of infinite value. When He rose from the dead, He proved that He had paid the price of all sin—past, present, and future.

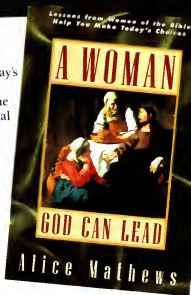
Third Step: Personally believe and receive God's gift. No one can earn a relationship with God. It is a gift of His mercy. "By grace you have been saved through faith, . . . it is the gift of God, not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9). We must be able to say, "Father, I know I have sinned against You. I believe that Jesus is Your Son, that He died for my sins, and that He rose from the dead to prove it. I accept Your offer of salvation and eternal life." If this is the honest expression of your heart, welcome to God's family!



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